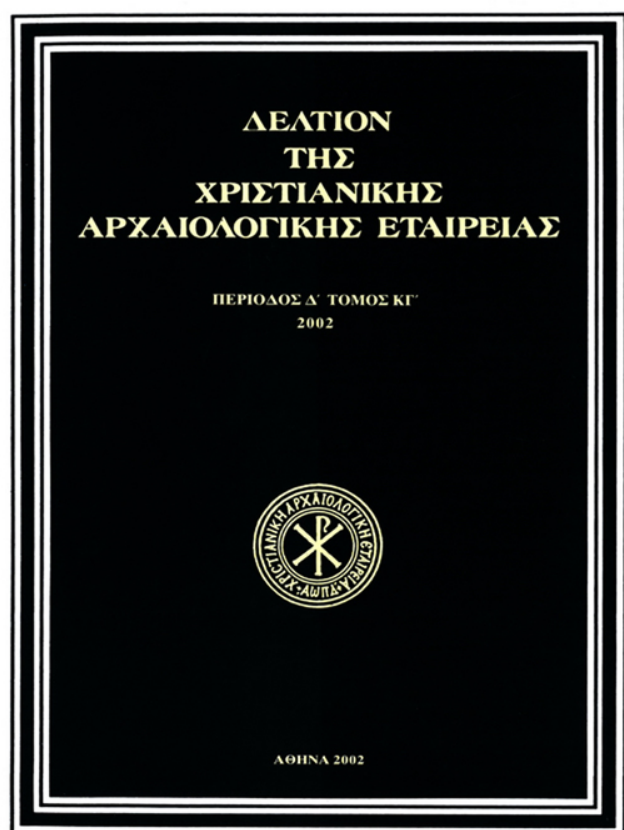


Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας

Τόμ. 23 (2002)

Δελτίον ΧΑΕ 23 (2002), Περίοδος Δ'



Ανασυνθέτοντας τα σμάλτα του τρίπτυχου
Khakhuli

Titos PAPAMASTORAKIS

doi: [10.12681/dchae.355](https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.355)

Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

PAPAMASTORAKIS, T. (2011). Ανασυνθέτοντας τα σμάλτα του τρίπτυχου Khakhuli. *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας*, 23, 225–254. <https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.355>



ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑΣ

Re-deconstructing the Khakhouli Triptych

Titos PAPAMASTORAKIS

Τόμος ΚΓ' (2002) • Σελ. 225-254

ΑΘΗΝΑ 2002

RE-DECONSTRUCTING THE KHAKHULI TRIPTYCH*

Whatever the time or place, as social beings, individuals and groups have always needed to parade their identity and connect it to the ancestral blood relationships which define their social status. The preservation of certain objects, which establish their identity and their relationship to their forefathers, reveals the vital strength of an individual or group that keeps their prestige intact. The Khakhuli Triptych¹ is an outstanding example of the way in which the identity, not just of one individual but of a whole dynasty, can be vaunted. Its very creation, its location in a royal foundation which had symbolic value for the dynasty, the metrical inscription that accompanies it, the precious materials used and the provenance of the enamels that decorated it, are all part of the phenomenon. In effect, this luxury object, which by virtue of its dedication to the Virgin assumed an inalienable value, incorporates part of the inherited

wealth of the Georgian kings in both real and symbolic terms. The Triptych is associated with the Georgian King Davit IV the Builder (1089-1125) and his project to create a large monastery dedicated to the Virgin at Gelati, near Kutaisi, the largest town in Georgia before the capture of Tbilisi in 1122². Work began on building this monastery complex in 1106. As well as the church, which Davit also intended to use as a family mausoleum³, an academy formed part of the complex. The *Georgian Chronicle* refers to the monastery as “a second Jerusalem” and “a second Athens”⁴, names that suggest Davit was aiming to promote the monastery as a symbol of his kingship. The same text also mentions that David dedicated precious reliquaries and icons to the monastery, as well as luxury liturgical objects made of rare materials, ecclesiastical furniture and lamps, crowns, jewels

* This paper was given in March 1999 at the International Symposium on *Mediterranean and Caucasus in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* organized by the Institute for Byzantine Research/NHRF (Athens) in collaboration with the Georgian Institute of Athens. I would like to thank Dr. A. Mikaberidze, director of the Georgian Institute and co-organizer of the Symposium, for encouraging me to take part in the Symposium by presenting the Khakhuli Triptych. Photographic credits 1-4 (A. Mikaberidze), 6 (Benaki Museum - Laskarina Boura). The digital processing of the reconstructions, the work of Markos Toufeklis, are based on the photographs in L. Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*.

1. N. Kondakov, *Histoire et monuments des émaux byzantins: La collection de A.W. Zwénigorodskoi*, Frankfurt 1892, p. 123-124 (hereafter: Kondakov, *Émaux byzantins*); D. Gordeev, K voprosu o razgrupirovanii emalej Hahulskogo okladnja, in *Mistezvoznastvo Sbornik I*, Harkov 1928, p. 149-169 which contains the first attempt at grouping the enamels from the Triptych (hereafter: Gordeev, Emalej Hahulskogo); Sh. Amiranashvili, *Les émaux de Géorgie*, Paris 1962, p. 94-123 (hereafter: Amiranashvili, *Les émaux*). R. Kenia, *Le triptique de la Vierge de Khakhuli*, Tbilisi 1972 (in Georgian with summary in French) (hereafter: Kenia, *Khakhuli*); Sh. Amiranashvili, *The Khakhuli Triptych*, Tbilisi 1972 (in Georgian and Russian with summary in English). Leila Z. Khuskivadze, *Medieval Cloisonné Enamels at Georgian State Museum of Fine Arts*, Tbilisi 1984, nos 1, 3-4, 16, 17-30, 39-70, 73-105, 192-223, which lists earlier bibliography on the enamels of the Triptych (hereafter: Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*); see also the unreferenced text by Johanna Flemming, Das Triptychon von Chachuli. Ein Zeugnis der Kunstpolitik

David's des Erbauers, in *IVe Symposium International sur l'art géorgien*, I, Tbilisi 1989, p. 525-540.

2. *The Georgian Chronicle. The Period of Giorgi Lasha*, text ed. by S. Qaukhchishvili, trans. K. Vivian, Amsterdam 1991, p. 13 (hereafter: *The Georgian Chronicle*). R. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History. The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles. The Original Georgian Texts and the Armenian Adaptation*, Oxford 1996, p. 321 (hereafter: Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History*). On the Gelati complex and its various phases of decoration see R. Mepisasvili and T. Virsaladze, *Gelati: Architecture - Mosaics - Frescoes*, Tbilisi 1982.

3. The creation *ex nihilo* of a large church intended as a royal mausoleum copies the prevailing trend in the same period in Constantinople, once the imperial mausoleum of Holy Apostles had been abandoned and the great luxury funerary churches such as those in the monasteries of the Perivleptos, St George in Mangana, the Philanthropou and the Kecharitomeni had been built. On the individual imperial mausolea in Constantinople in the eleventh century see T. Papamastorakis, The Tomb of Zoe, in *The Empire in Crisis... : Byzantium in the 11th Century (1025-1071)*, Conference Proceedings, Institute for Byzantine Research/NHRF and The Speros Basil Vryonis Center for the Study of Hellenism (forthcoming).

4. *The Georgian Chronicle*, p. 14: “Indeed, there is now a second Jerusalem of all the East for learning of all that is of value, for the teaching of knowledge – a second Athens, far excelling the first in divine law, a canon for all ecclesiastical splendour”. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 322.

and holy vessels from his personal collection of plundered spoils as a thank offering to God for the victories He had granted him in battle⁵. These objects have not survive, but Davit's ambitious plans for the decoration of his monastery can be appreciated from the mosaics in the apse of the catholikon, a unique phenomenon in medieval Georgian art. Shortly before his death in 1125, Davit IV exhorted his son and heir to complete the monastery: *I leave the monastery, my tomb and the ossuary of my children, unfinished, and I leave it with eternal longing. Let my son, Demetre complete it for ever - for me, for himself, and for posterity*⁶. His wish was fulfilled and work to complete the monastery continued under Demetre I (1125–1154), his son and heir.

Davit brought to Gelati an enamel icon of the Virgin, which had hitherto been in the church at Khakhuli (now in Eastern Turkey)⁷. The date of the transfer is not given in the sources but must be after 1106 (the year in which the monastery was founded) and before 1125 (when Davit died). In his will Davit mentions, among other things, that he has dedicated his rubies and pearls to the "icon of the Khakhuli Virgin"⁸. In other words, he is giving up part of his accumulated wealth as a sacrifice to this particular icon of the Virgin. This means that the Khakhuli Virgin was either already well known as a miracle-working icon or as an heirloom of special significance for the Georgian ruler, or both. Whatever the case may be, its transfer to Gelati was most probably due to Davit's determination to give his foundation prestige by endowing it with important relics.

It was Davit IV's son, Demetre I, who undertook to incorporate the icon into a large-scale triptych (1.47×2.02 m) (Fig. 1), as a long, metrical dedicatory inscription in Khoutzouri

script on the lower edges of the two wings of the triptych, at-tests. The purpose of the inscription was to confirm the relationship between the earthly donors (Davit and Demetre) and the heavenly recipient (the Virgin) and to establish the former as the celebrated patrons of both the foundation itself and of the Khakhuli Triptych⁹.

The Triptych's versified dedicatory inscription is addressed to the Virgin and is divided into two parts. The first refers to King Davit IV, and compares the Virgin's Davidic lineage to that of the Bagratid ruler, emphasizing his dedication, body and soul, to the Virgin and the church he founded in her honour, obviously Gelati. In the second part Demetre I, son and heir of Davit IV, is called a new Bezaleel, and is compared in terms of genealogy and power with Solomon and praised for entrusting his kingdom to the Virgin and embellishing her icon with gold and silver. Thus, the construction of the Ark of the Covenant by Bezaleel and the founding of the temple in Jerusalem by Solomon are compared with the creation of the Triptych—an "ark" for the icon of the Virgin—and with the completion of the church at Gelati. According to the Old Testament, Bezaleel used gold, silver and precious stones to build the Ark of the Covenant, in other words he used the accumulated wealth of the Israelites. Similarly, Demetre I used part of the accumulated wealth inherited from his father Davit IV to clad the Triptych in gold and silver and decorate it with precious stones.

The parallels, however, also extend to the lineage of the two Georgian rulers. Indeed, according to Armeno-Georgian tradition the Bagratid dynasty was descended from the biblical house of David and was therefore related to the Virgin¹⁰. In the Georgian Chronicle Demetre I's coronation by his fa-

5. Thomson, *op.cit.*, p. 321.

6. Kenia, *Khakhuli*, p. 29.

7. *Idem*, p. 27. According to the Georgian Chronicle the monastery was founded by David Kourpalates, see Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 274.

8. Kenia, *Khakhuli*, p. 29.

9. This inscription was first published in a European language (French) by M.F. Brosset, *Rapport sur un voyage archéologique dans la Géorgie et dans l'Arménie, exécuté en 1847 et 1848*, St Petersburg 1849-51, rapport XI, p. 19-20: *Comme autrefois celui qui eut le bonheur d'être père de Dieu, quand tu fleuris dans son sein, ô reine, s'empessa d'orner tout ce qui t'appartenait, à toi temple de Dieu; ainsi présentement David, rejeton de David, te fit l'hommage de son âme, de son corps et d'un temple, ô Vierge. // Puis nouveau Bésélie, doublement Salomon, par la descendance et par l'autorité, Dimitri a orné et fait briller ton image, comme le soleil du firmament, maintenant aussi le temps nient d'intercéder, ô Mère de Dieu, et de régner en haut avec ton Christ.*

In 1892 the Triptych's inscription was published again in French by N. Kondakov, *Émaux byzantins*, p. 124, on the basis of a reading by his collaborator, the Georgian paleographer D. Bakradzé: *De même que toi, ô reine, issue du sein de celui qui, dans l'ancien temps, devint, par grâce de Dieu, père de Dieu toi qui enrichis le temple de Dieu – Toi-même – et l'ornes de toutes sortes d'ustensiles; de même que David, ce rejeton de David s'est consacré corps et âme au temple et à toi, ô Vierge; // De même Démétrius, ce nouveau Besseliel, Salomon de par la naissance et de par la puissance, a orné doublement ton visage d'or et d'argent, comme le soleil dans le firmament, confiant dans ton intervention, pour le cours du temps, et pour son règne, conjointement avec toi, Mère de Dieu, et avec le Christ.*

10. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, I, Greek text (ed. Gy Moravcsik), CFHB 1, Washington, D.C. 1967, ch. 45, p. 204. 1-12: *The Iberians, I mean, those who belong to the curopalate, pique themselves upon their descent from the wife of Uriah, with whom David, the prophet and king, committed adultery: for they say they are descended from the children she bore to David and are related to David, the prophet*

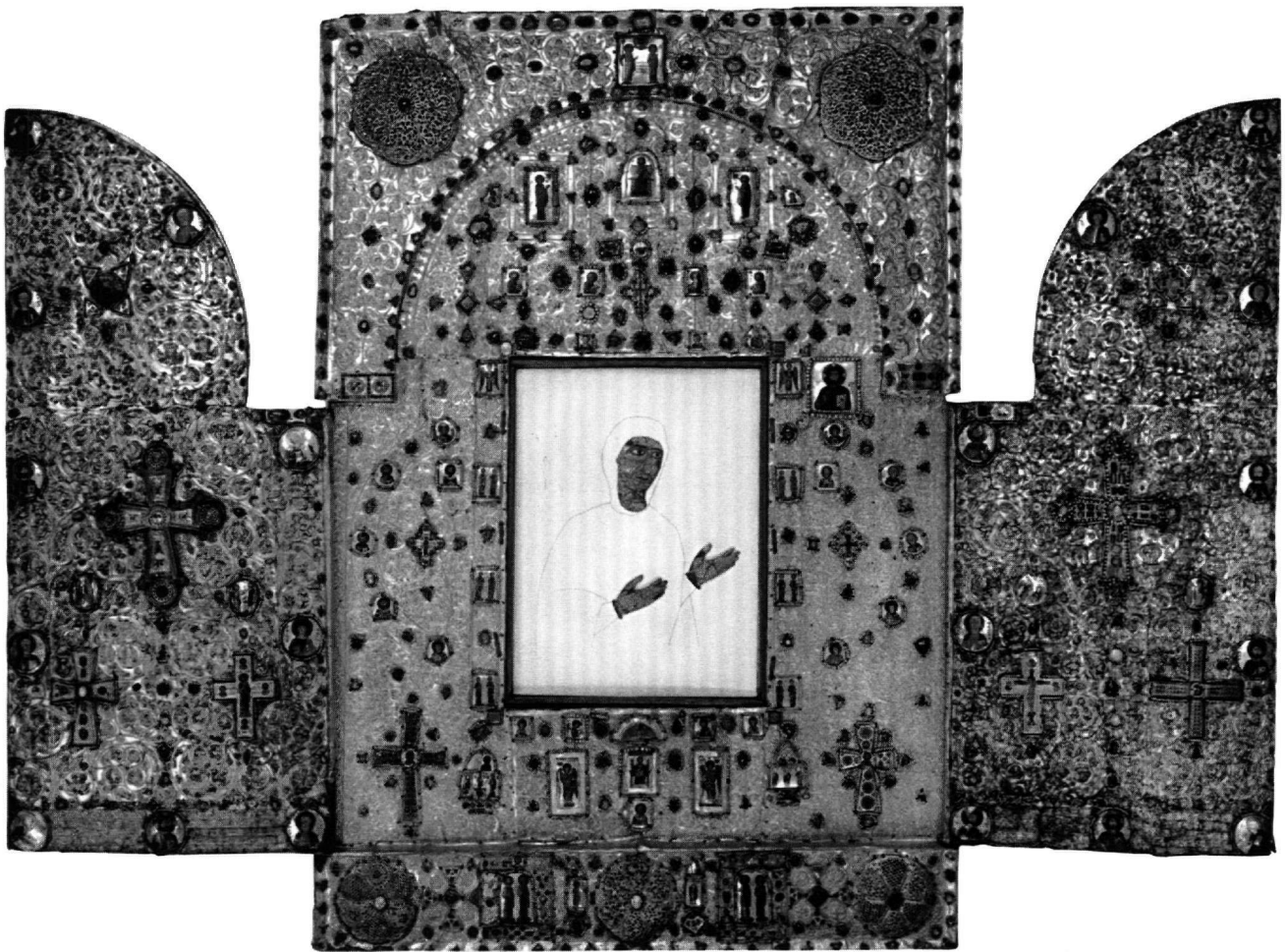


Fig. 1. The Khakhuli Triptych.

ther Davit IV, prior to the latter's death, is described as follows: "and just as the first David enthroned Solomon, he (Davit Bagratid) too set his son Demetre on the throne with his own hands, different (from Solomon) only in name, who bore every vestige of resemblance to his ancestral stock"¹¹.

The inscription ends with Demetre expressing his confi-

dence in the Virgin's intervening as a force for good in the rest of his life and in her working alongside him, with the help of Christ, in the governance of his kingdom. Thus the inscription functions as a sort of contract between Demetre and the Virgin; it aims to maintain the reciprocity that has already been established between them¹². We may infer

and king, and consequently to the most holy Mother of God also, inasmuch as she was by descent of the seed of David. The comparison of Demetre with Solomon corresponds exactly with the Solomonic Ideal as it first appears and is formulated under the Byzantine emperors of the ninth and tenth centuries: see Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, II, Commentary (ed. R.J.H. Jenkins), London 1962, p. 9. I. Anagnostakis, The Danielis Episode (in Greek), in *Everyday Life in Byzantium, Acts of the First International Symposium of the Institute for Byzantine Research/NHRF*, Athens 1989, p. 389.

11. *The Georgian Chronicle*, p. 46, 49. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 353.

12. On the relationships established or renewed through gift-giving from mortals to the heavenly powers and manifestations thereof in dedicatory inscriptions on luxury icons of the twelfth century, see: T. Papamastorakis, The Display of Accumulated Wealth in Luxury Icons: Gift-giving from the Byzantine Aristocracy to God in the 12th Century, in *Byzantine Icons: Art, Technique and Technology* (ed. M. Vassilaki), Crete University Press, Heraklion 2002, p. 35-49.

from the text of the inscription that the Triptych was decorated at the beginning of Demetre I's reign and immediately after the death of Davit IV, that is to say in the period 1125-30¹³.

The dedicatory inscription bears witness to the identity and lineage of the donor, which are paraded in the same way as the precious enamels used on the Triptych. The luxurious form of the Triptych is due to the exceptional devotional status of the icon it contained, but it also conveys the donor's (i.e. Demetre I's) social status. And it is the latter, in the spirit of *noblesse oblige*, that imposes the need to create an object worthy of its dedicatee, the Virgin, and worthy of Demetre's own social position, but also worthy of the objective he is seeking to achieve with this ex-voto. Just as with other dedicatory inscriptions accompanying de-luxe objects in the same period, there is no mention in the Triptych's inscription of the artistic value of the work: this resides in the precious materials, the social status and the objectives of the donor.

The Triptych was created to enclose and protect the icon, to be its luxury cover, evidence of the riches laid up by the icon and by its owner. We must assume that it was usually closed and only opened under specific circumstances, as was the case with the Pala d'Oro in St Mark's in Venice¹⁴. To close something means to deny access to it, to isolate it from other people, to hide it away. Conversely, to open something means to permit access, to make public, to display. In other words it is a power game in which the right to view, and to share in the grace of, the sacred object is vetted. Thus the Khakhuli Virgin was displayed before the eyes of the masses in all her glory, or withdrew into it.

According to a no longer extant inscription on the north pier of the church the name given to the Triptych was "Virgin of the Holy Altar of Khakhuli and Gelati"¹⁵. This piece of evidence leads us to conclude that the Triptych was placed in the sanctuary from the very beginning, a situation it continued to occupy for 800 years. The Pala d'Oro in St Mark's, Venice, a work of art that paraded the power of the "Queen of the Seas", occupies the same situation¹⁶. The Khakhuli Triptych and the Pala d'Oro are the largest extant collec-

tions of assembled Byzantine enamels. Yet there are many stylistic and structural differences between these two medieval works. The Pala d'Oro is characterized by its arrangement of enamels in an architectural frame within which they are arranged by size, shape and iconographic content. The arrangement of the gold tracery contains elements of Gothic art and architecture and succeeds on the one hand in displaying the enamels individually and on the other in setting off the precious materials, the gold and precious stones. Ultimately it constitutes a masterly arrangement, which facilitates both the reading of the enamels', iconographic content and an appreciation of the wealth and beauty of the materials involved. By contrast, the Khakhuli Triptych belongs to the eastern tradition, in which the individuality of the various parts of the whole are hinted at but not emphasized. This also applies to the geometrical arrangement of which they are an "imperceptible" part. With regard to the Pala d'Oro restoring the elevation of a building is straightforward, whereas in the Khakhuli Triptych the organization of the surface within which the enamels and precious stones are arranged blurs the idea of a round-topped elevation scheme in which the icon is placed (the shape which the closed Triptych reflects) and a plan of a church with its semicircular apse and lateral semicircular choirs. Thus, it gives the impression that the enamels and precious stones are "swimming" in a sea of gold from which they just happen to emerge, arranged in a "random" symmetrical geometry. It is only when one notices the repoussé tendrils of the gold ground that one realizes that the enamels are set in an "amorphous", but nevertheless organized, arrangement. Moreover, although the Khakhuli Triptych and the Pala d'Oro can be compared with one another as display cases for accumulated wealth, the provenance of the enamels decorating them are quite different. Half the enamels on the Pala d'Oro were acquired as booty whereas, as I shall attempt to show hereafter, most of those on the Khakhuli Triptych came as diplomatic gifts.

The central part of the Khakhuli Triptych is clad in pure gold, while the lateral wings are covered in silver gilt (Fig. 2). The basic decorative device, in repoussé, is the linked foliate

13. Amiranashvili, *Les émaux* and Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, date the construction and decoration of the Triptych in a general way to the reign of Demetre I, that is between 1125 and 1154. Kenia, *Khakhuli*, p. 107 restricts the dating to somewhere between 1125 and 1130.

14. According to Sylvester Syropoulos's account, access to the Pala d'Oro was restricted to just two occasions in the year, Christmas and

Easter. See V. Laurent, *Les «mémoires» du Grand Ecclésiastique de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence (1428-1439)*, Rome 1971, p. 222, 628.

15. See Kenia, *Khakhuli*, p. 26.

16. On the Pala d'Oro see the recent publication *La Pala d'Oro. Il Tesoro di San Marco* (ed. H.R. Hahnloser and R. Polacco), Venice 1994.

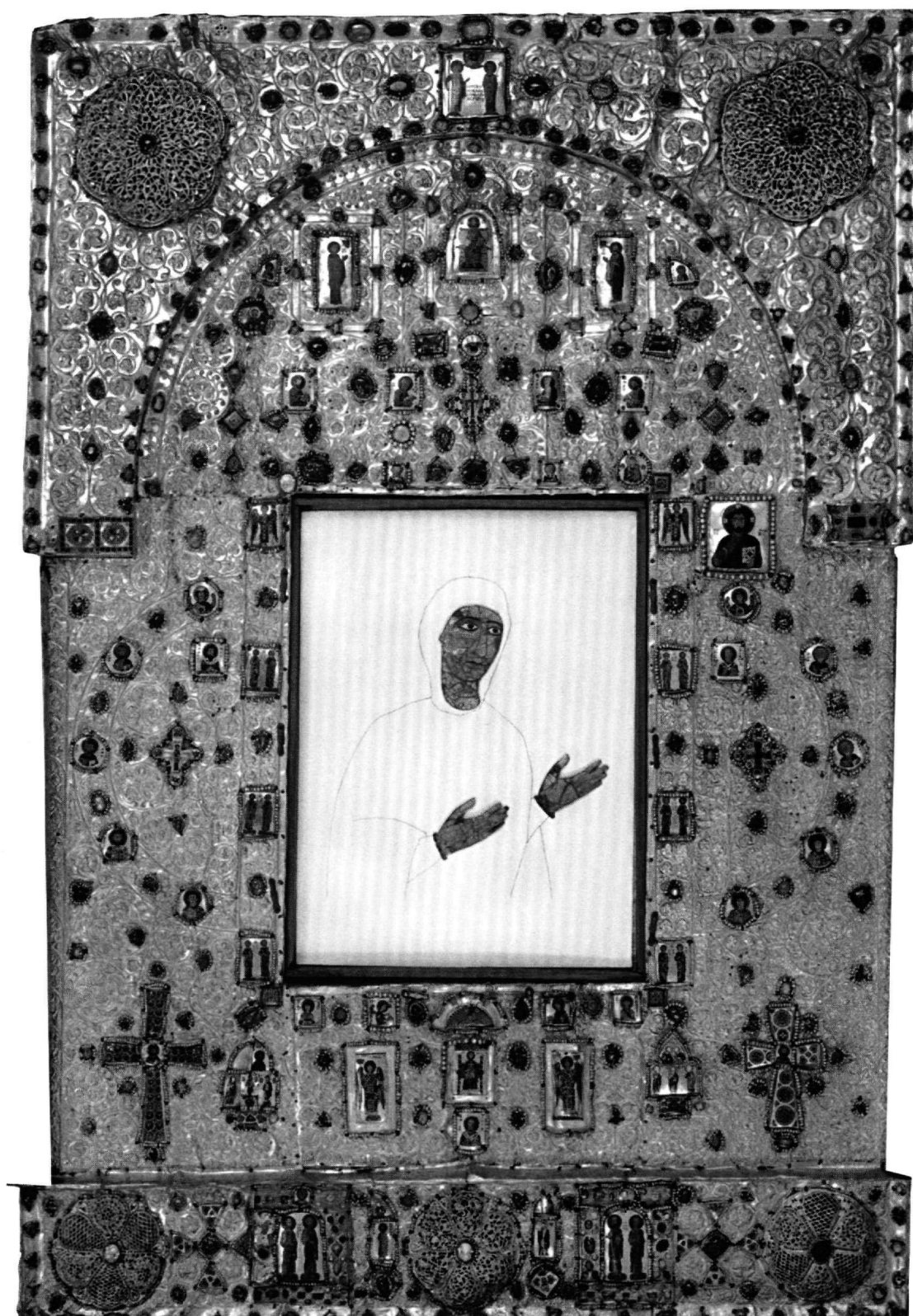


Fig. 2. Central panel of the Khakhuli Triptych.

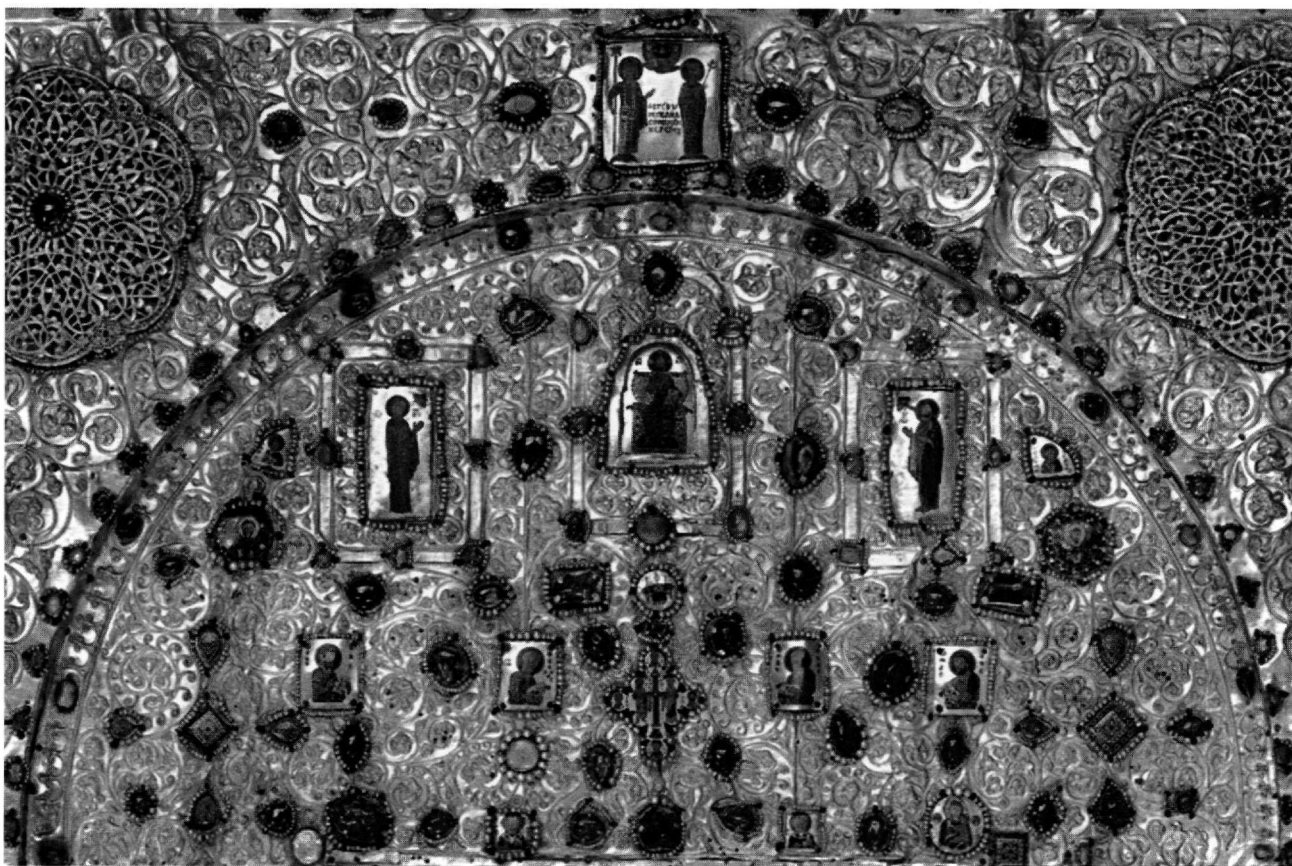


Fig. 3. Upper part of the central panel of the Khakhuli Triptych.

scroll of flowers and leaves, which create circles of varying sizes. The outer faces of the wings, also clad in silver gilt, each incorporate a large cross. On its inner face the Triptych is decorated with dozens of tiny enamels with figurative or non-figurative decoration, crosses and hundreds of precious and semi-precious stones. All the enamels and most of the precious stones are framed with pearls.

Within this decorative system places have been planned, in various ways, for almost all the enamels, so that they fit into the foliate scrollwork without interrupting it. The three enamels that go to make up the Deesis, which are in the tympanum-like space above the central icon, are encircled by frames that follow their outlines with room to spare (Fig. 3): rectangular frames for the Virgin and John the Baptist, and a rectangular one with a rounded top for the enthroned Christ. These frames are made up of a plain outer band with an expanse of foliate decoration inside. The enamels of the Virgin and St John the Baptist are surrounded by a row of pearls that fit close to their edges. With regard to the enamel with the image of Christ, the row of pearls is placed along

the outer edge of an inner plain band immediately surrounding the enamel and not along the edge of the latter, as in the other two enamels. This makes the Christ panel to look larger than it actually is.

Four enamels with the figures of a Christ seated on a rainbow, an enthroned Virgin and Child and the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, situated directly beneath the central icon (Fig. 4), are also surrounded by plain bands of gold, each of which is then framed with a row of pearls to make them seem larger. The ground on either side of the central icon of the Virgin, is decorated with bands in which a series of enamels, all of the same size, are arranged symmetrically (Fig. 2). Eight rectangular enamels are arranged in two vertical columns, while ten circular enamels are disposed in two semicircles. Other enamels have been placed in undecorated spaces, left deliberately among the scrollwork of the overall decoration. The rectangular enamel with the figure of Christ Pantokrator, towards which the Virgin of the central icon is directing her gesture of intercession, is placed on a simple, unembellished base, just a little larger than the



Fig. 4. Lower part of the central panel of the Khakhuli Triptych.

enamel itself. The circular enamels with the figures of Christ, the Virgin, John the Baptist and the apostles on the wings of the Triptych are arranged symmetrically in spaces that were left undecorated. The quatrefoil enamel with the Crucifixion and the decorative cross, which occupy corresponding positions on the wings with regard to the central icon are also placed on undecorated spaces. The foregoing observations demonstrate that the foliate scrollwork of the ground was designed not only to play a supporting role to the central icon of the Virgin in decorative terms, but also to highlight the most important enamels in Davit IV's collection. The rest of the enamels on the Triptych are arranged symmetrically around the central icon or in relation to one another on the decorated ground. The metal behind these enamels has been removed to create the necessary support framework.

Seven rectangular enamels with figures of the four evangelists and three church fathers, arranged symmetrically in relation to the central icon, are attached to the gold ground of the main panel without removing the metal underneath, resulting in disruption to the foliate decoration (Figs 3-4). The enamel with the figure of St Nicholas is set on a rhomboid-shaped space underneath the central icon, which was intended for some other enamel or decorative plaque (Fig. 4).

This means that these enamels were added to the decoration of the Khakhuli Triptych at some unknown date, but certainly after the original decorative scheme was complete.

The Triptych contains about ninety-five figurative enamels at present¹⁷. Eighty-two of these are medieval, while thirteen of them are early twentieth-century replacements for plaques which had probably been lost or stolen. Georgian scholars date the Triptych's old enamels to between the eighth and the twelfth centuries and consider many of them to be the products of local, Georgian workshops¹⁸. Moreover, the old figurative enamels have already been sorted into groups on the basis of their dimensions, technique and style, firstly by Gordeev and later by Amiranashvili and Khuskivadze.

However, a systematic examination of the enamels using the same fundamental criteria, but adding iconography and above all comparative material, leads me to think that most of the enamels: (a) are to be dated between the ninth and the eleventh centuries, and (b) come from Byzantine workshops. The presence of Byzantine enamels in Georgia in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, a time when the links between the empire and the Georgian rulers are well known, leads me to suppose that these enamels were recycled to decorate the Triptych and that they were originally set into

17. See Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, no. 1, p. 21, nos 3-4, p. 22, no. 84, p. 65, nos 89-105, p. 72-78, where earlier bibliography is given for each enamel.

18. *Idem*, no. 1, p. 21 (8th century), nos 3-4, p. 22 (9th century), no. 83-105, p. 64-78 (12th century), where bibliography for each enamel.

luxury objects, sent as gifts from Byzantium to Georgia. In fact, a systematic study of the material, together with the nature of their iconographic content, led me to organize a considerable number of the enamels into groups of five or more enamels which share certain special features¹⁹. The techniques or stylistic details in question suggest that the enamels in each group were made at one and the same time by a single craftsman or in a single workshop. Moreover, the seven groups of enamels listed below in chronological order can, I hope, be convincingly restored as part of the original objects/gifts to which they once belonged.

Group I. There are nine rectangular enamels (measuring 4.9×3.8 cm.) in Group I, bearing figures of the two archangels, the twelve apostles and the enthroned Virgin with Child²⁰. The six plaques with the twelve figures of the apostles and the two with the archangels are placed, four on either side, in the two vertical columns on either side of the central icon of the Triptych. The plaque with the enthroned Virgin and Child is set below the central icon (Figs 2 and 4). Their dimensions, the colour range and the technique, their stylistic similarities and their subject matter make it obvious that they are the work of a single craftsman and that they all come from the same original object. On the basis of their iconography I propose the following arrangement on the object they were created to decorate (Fig. 5). There are three superposed bands: at the centre of the middle band was set the plaque with the enthroned Virgin and Child with the plaque with the Archangel Michael to the left and that with the Archangel Gabriel to the right. At the centre of the upper band was placed the plaque with the apostles Peter and Paul, with the evangelists John and Mark to the left and the other two evangelists, Luke and Matthew, to the right. In the middle of the lower band was the plaque with the youthful-looking apostles Philip and Thomas, with the apostles Andrew and James to the left and Bartholomew and Simon to the right. Thus the upper band contained the four evangelists and the two chiefs of the apostles, while the one beneath it had the enthroned Virgin and Child and flanking archangels and the lowest band contained the six remaining apostles. The com-

position thus formed is similar to that on the cover of the Limburg Reliquary, except that in the latter an enthroned Christ, flanked by John the Baptist to the right and the Virgin to the left, takes the place of the Virgin and Child flanked by archangels (Fig. 6). The similarities between these two groups have already been noted by M. Ross²¹.

Above the plaque with the enthroned Virgin and Child and within the frame that surrounds it a slim, rectangular plaque (measuring 0.8×4 cm.) decorated with stepped crosses has been inserted. In my opinion this plaque belonged to the original decoration of the object for which the nine enamels of Group I were made. Identical decoration surrounds the nine enamels on the Limburg Reliquary. If we place the enamels of Group I within the frame of the Limburg Reliquary, we shall achieve a similar effect (Figs 5-6). The similarities of technique, iconography and style between the Khakhuli Triptych enamels of Group I and those of the Limburg Reliquary (dated to 968-985²²), lead me to conclude that they come from the same workshop and can be dated to the same period.

The object in question, most probably a reliquary, would have been given by Basil II around the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century as a diplomatic gift to a Georgian ruler. The importance of the gift to his descendants must have been considerable, since it was not only preserved as a relic but, once it had been dismantled, its enamels were used to frame the central image of the Virgin on the Khakhuli Triptych (Fig. 2).

Group II. On either side of the central icon ten roundels of identical dimensions (4 cm. in diam.) with busts of the two archangels, four evangelists and four military saints²³ have been arranged symmetrically in two semicircles (Fig. 2). Their dimensions, their close stylistic relationship, the inscriptions and the range of colours make it highly likely that they originate from the same work, and I shall call them Group II²⁴. The delineation of facial features –eyes, eyebrows set at an obtuse angle, noses, ears– is absolutely identical, as are the bindings of the four gospels and the decora-

19. I have observed the same rules for grouping the enamels as Paul Hetherington used in his study of the decoration on the cover of the Byzantine Evangelistary in the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati in Siena, *Byzantine Enamels on a Venetian Book-Cover*, *CahArch* 27 (1978), p. 117-145.

20. See Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, nos 17-25, p. 32. Gordeev, *Emalej Hahulskogo*, p. 151-152.

21. M. Ross, *Byzantine Enamels*, in *Byzantine Art - A European Art*, Ex-

hibition Catalogue, Athens 1964, p. 396.

22. For the post 968 dating of the Limburg Reliquary see N. Ševčenko, *The Limburg Staurothek and its Relics*, in *Θυμίαση στη μνήμη της Λαοκρατίας Μπούρα*, Athens 1994, p. 292-293.

23. See Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, nos 73-82, p. 63.

24. Gordeev was the first to group these ten enamels together, *ibid.* *Emalej Hahulskogo*, p. 156.

tive pattern on the chlamys worn by each of the four military saints. The latter are not depicted as military men, but as martyrs. The folds of the neck are depicted with two lines in the archangels and in Sts George and Demetrios. Various dates have been proposed for the enamels in Group II: some scholars put them in the first half of the twelfth century and others consider they pre-date the creation of the Triptych²⁵. The sketchy delineation of the drapery folds, ending in hooks, is related to techniques of the tenth century and fits in with a dating earlier than the twelfth century, most probably in the first half of the eleventh. Moreover, dating the creation of the Triptych to the period 1125-30 presupposes that these enamels were already in Davit's collection, as their placement in pre-planned settings indicates and thus I do not think they can be dated to the twelfth century.

What is distinctive about the enamels in Group II is the colours, green and blue, that have been used in the haloes of the ten figures. The haloes of the evangelists Luke and Mark and the three saints Theodore, George and Prokopios, are blue surrounded with green at the outer edge. The haloes of the two archangels and of St John the Evangelist and Matthew are green, surrounded by blue at the outer edge. The halo of St Demetrios, though, is green surrounded with red at its outer edge.

The differentiations of colour in the haloes is either intended to make certain figures stand out or to emphasize their individual characteristics, or simply to achieve a particular aesthetic effect. For example on the crown of Leo VI, which is kept in the Treasury of St Mark's in Venice²⁶, the emperor is depicted with a blue halo, while the holy personages accompanying him have green haloes. On the chalice of Romanos, also in the Treasury of St Mark's²⁷, the haloes are depicted in various colours. The Virgin's halo is green, the archangels' azure blue and the hierarchs' dark blue. On the Esztergom Reliquary Constantine the Great's halo is green whereas that of St Helena is blue and on the Monopoli Reliquary St Peter's halo is dark blue while that of St Paul is light blue²⁸. On the enamels of the Byzantine binding of cod. gr. I.

53 in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice²⁹, the figures have different coloured haloes according to their identity: the haloes of the church fathers are green, those of the prophets and the martyrs azure blue and that of the archangel dark blue. On another Byzantine binding decorated with enamels in the Marciana Library (cod. lat. 3.111)³⁰, the decorative edging on the apostles' haloes is different from that on the haloes of the martyrs.

The ten enamels of Group II contain a pair of archangels, two pairs of saints and two pairs of evangelists. These five pairs, if placed symmetrically in relation to a vertical axis, would create a rectangular frame around a central group or figure. On the basis of the number and the iconography of these enamels, the object they originally decorated could be an icon frame where the enamels would have been placed in pairs, in accordance with the identity of the figures they depict: the four evangelists in the corners, the military saints in twos on the vertical sides and the two archangels occupying the centre of the horizontal sides (upper and lower) of the frame (Fig. 7). While the arrangement suggested above presents no problems from an iconographical point of view, it is not satisfactory in respect of the colour variations in the haloes or of a symmetrical correspondence in the ages of the figures.

In the Freising icon³¹ the enamels which decorate the frame are still in their original positions, and show that the figures are placed in such a way that the colours of their haloes (blue and green) alternate. In the two bindings from the Marciana Library, the setting of the enamels has been disturbed, but if they are put back in their original positions then it becomes clear that: on the first binding (cod. gr. I.53) the colours of the haloes on both fronts alternate regularly; on the second binding (cod. lat. 3.111) the two groups of apostles and martyrs (also differentiated by the decoration on their haloes) each belonged to a different side of the book cover (i.e. *recto* or *verso*). So on the basis of the differing colours of the haloes (which are not in my view haphazard), of the hierarchy in the figures, and of their ages, I propose the following arrangement for the enamels of Group II (Fig. 8): if we retain the basic

25. Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, nos 73-82, p. 63 dates them to the first half of the twelfth century, while Amiranashvili, *Les émaux*, p. 112 thinks they come from an old («ancienne») collection.

26. *Le Trésor de Saint-Marc de Venise*, Exhibition Catalogue, Milan 1984, no. 8, p. 117-123 (M. Frazer).

27. *Idem*, no. 11, p. 137-140 (M. Frazer).

28. *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843-1261*, Exhibition Catalogue, New York 1997, no. 40, p. 81 and

no. 110, p. 163 respectively.

29. *Le Trésor de Saint-Marc*, *op.cit.*, no. 19, p. 176-178 (M. Frazer).

30. K. Wessel, *Die byzantinische Email Kunst vom 5. bis 13. Jahrhundert*, Recklinghausen 1967, no. 58, p. 184-186 (hereafter: Wessel, *Email Kunst*).

31. *Idem*, no. 65, p. 197-198. *Rom und Byzanz. Schatzkammerstücke aus bayerischen Sammlungen* (ed. R. Baumstark), Munich 1998, no. 84, p. 244-249.



Fig. 5. Proposed arrangement of the enamels of Group I on a reliquary case.

hypothesis that the enamels were framing a central group or figure, I believe that the roundel with the bust of St Theodore was placed in the centre of the upper part of the frame, with the roundel depicting the Archangel Michael on the left and that of the Archangel Gabriel on the right. Under the two archangels were the roundels with the evangelists Luke and Mark. Below them came the other two roundels with the evangelists John and Matthew. In the lower part of the frame were the three roundels with military

saints, St Prokopios on the left, St Demetrios in the middle and St George on the right.

This arrangement manages, on the one hand, to accommodate alternating blue and green haloes and on the other a strict hierarchy among the figures disposed on the vertical sides, with the angels set above the evangelists, who in their turn, are placed above the saints. As regards the relative ages of the figures, this arrangement gives us the following result: St Theodore, who must be placed in the central point



Fig. 6. Exterior of the Limburg Reliquary. Diocesan Museum, Limburg an der Lahn.

of the upper part of the frame on account of the colour of his halo, is flanked by the two youthful figures of the archangels, emphasizing his mature status. The evangelists Luke and Mark, with their mature features, and the elderly St John the Evangelist and St Matthew make two contrasting pairs. Finally the youthful St Demetrios, whose red-edged halo distinguishes him from the other figures, takes the central place on the lower part of the frame, flanked by two equally youthful figures, Prokopios and George.

The above arrangement of enamels in Group II cannot, of course, be considered representative of the decoration on an icon frame or even a book cover, and thus any hypothesis relating the enamels to works of that sort is inevitably weakened. The arrangement, which I am proposing, results in the busts of Sts Theodore and Demetrios being given added prominence without disturbing the hierarchy of the figures. In my opinion, the emphasis on these two saints helps us identify the type of object on which the enamels of Group II

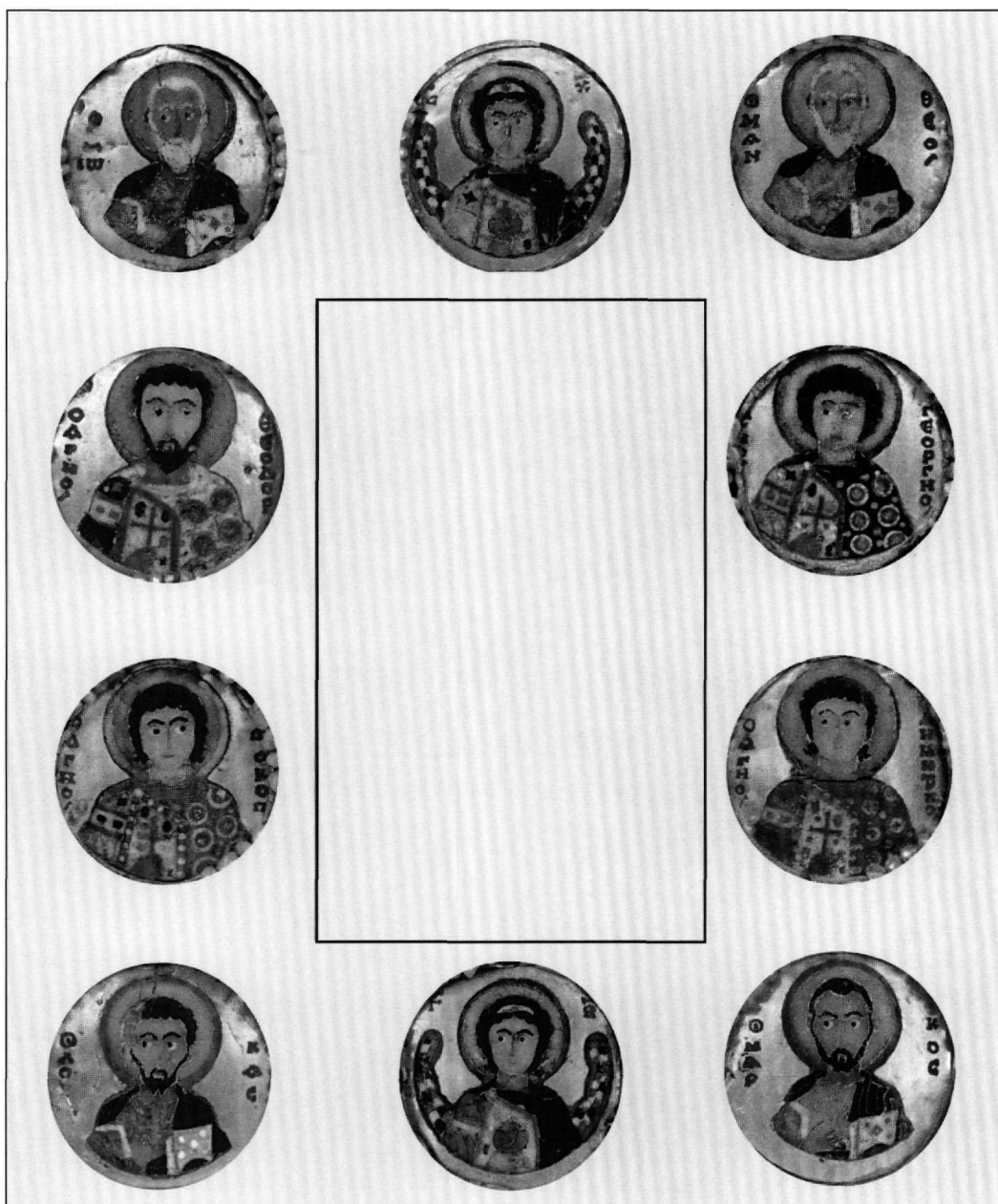


Fig. 7. First proposed arrangement of the enamels of Group II on an icon frame.

were originally set. I believe it was a cover for a reliquary containing, in addition to the relic of the saint depicted in the central image, some relic of St Theodore and blood or holy oil from the relics of St Demetrios. This hypothesis is supported by the depiction of the four military saints as martyrs and not as warriors, as well as the choice of figures suitable for this sort of object. On the cover of the Limburg Reliquary³² the figures of Sts Theodore, George, Demetrios and

Eustathios have been set, together with another four figures of church fathers, surrounding the depiction of the Deesis

32. For the Limburg Reliquary see J. Rauch, *Die Limburger Stau-
rothek*, *Das Münster* 7/8 (1955), p. 201-218, fig. 1-2, 9. Wessel, *Email
Kunst*, no. 22, p. 77.

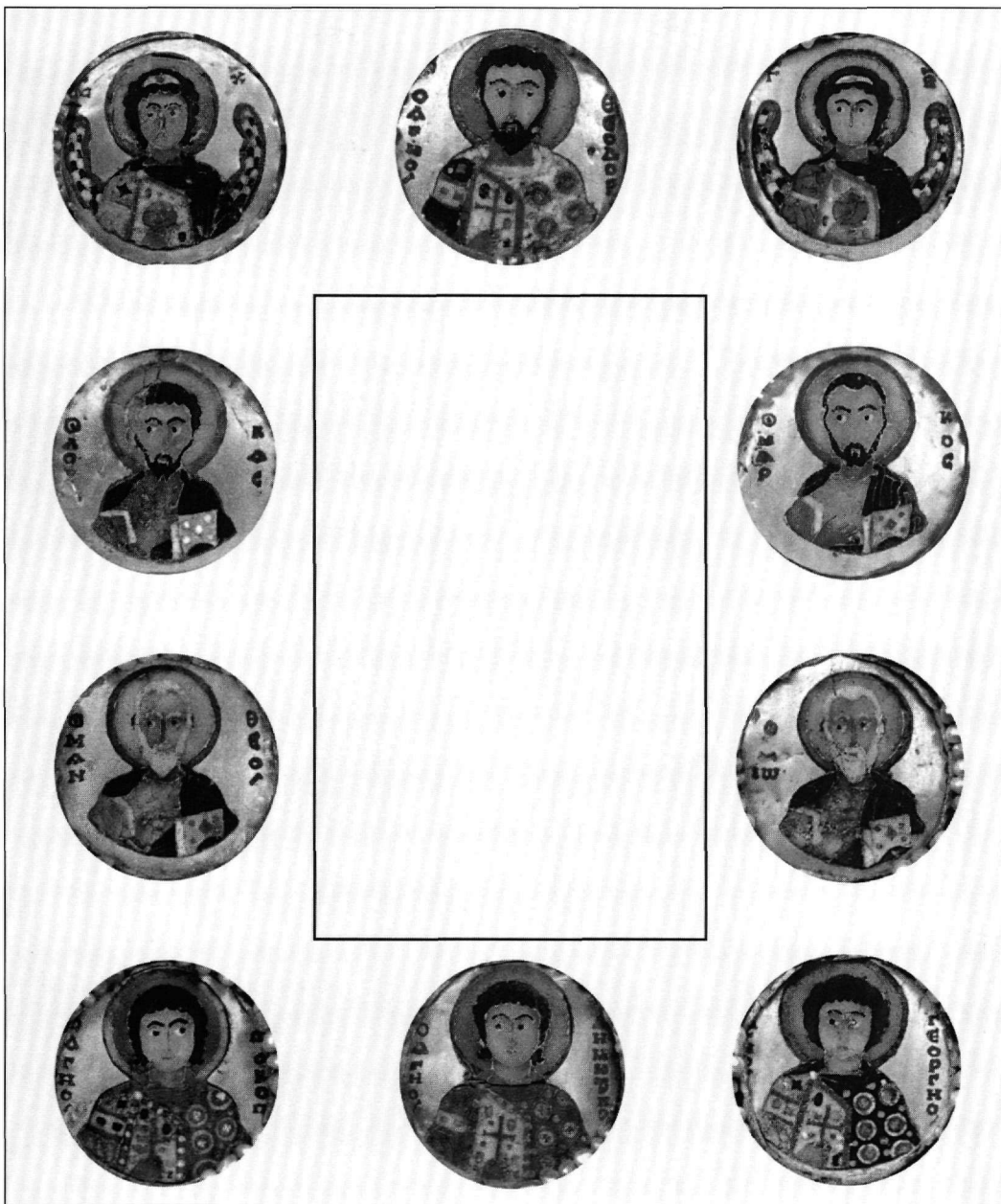


Fig. 8. Second proposed arrangement of the enamels of Group II on a reliquary case.

and the figures of the apostles and evangelists. On the Stavelot Reliquary Triptych³³ the outer faces of the two wings are decorated with the four evangelists, whereas Sts George, Theodore, Prokopios and Demetrios appear on the inner faces, once again in the guise of martyrs.

Whatever arrangement one accepts for the enamels of Group II, it is noticeable that the artist has not maintained any continuity in the direction of the figures' gaze. The four evangelists

and the two archangels are all turning their gaze towards the right, with the result that two of the evangelists and one of the archangels are looking out beyond the frame of the object. A

33. Wessel, *Email Kunst*, no. 47, p. 156. W. Voelkle, *The Stavelot Triptych*, New York 1980, p. 21, fig. 7 (hereafter: Voelkle, *Stavelot Triptych*).

similar example where the artist has not given any consequence to the gaze being directed towards the central image or the viewer is to be found in the enamels of a luxury icon in the Dumbarton Oaks collection³⁴, in which the Archangel Michael, situated on the left-hand side, is looking out of the frame, whereas Christ, placed in the centre, instead of looking towards the viewer, is directing his gaze to the right, where the figure of John the Baptist is located. The same thing happens on the roundels from the Djumati icon³⁵ – nine of which are now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, one in the Tbilisi Museum and one in the Musée de Cluny – where Christ turns his gaze on the Baptist rather than looking at the viewer, while neither of the two figures of military saints (Theodore and George), that might have been set at the centre of the lower part of the frame, looks directly at the viewer, each turning their gaze to the left. Likewise on the icon of the Virgin Nikopoios in Venice³⁶ Christ, situated in the centre of the frame, instead of looking at the viewer is directing his gaze to the figure of the Virgin on the left.

Groups III and IV. Around the edges of the two wings of the Triptych there were originally twenty enamel roundels of identical dimensions (6 cm. in diameter). Three of these have been replaced with modern enamels in the early part of the twentieth century. Among the remaining seventeen there are three representations of Christ Pantokrator, two of St John the Evangelist, St Matthew and the apostle Simon and one each of the Virgin, St John the Baptist, and the apostles Peter, Luke, Philip, Andrew, Thomas and James³⁷.

Their subject matter makes it clear that they were not designed to decorate the Khakhuli Triptych. If they had been, then there would be no need to repeat some of the apostles, nor would it have been necessary to provide three similar roundels with images of Christ. The enamels in Groups III and IV have been considered products of a Georgian work-

shop and dated to the twelfth century³⁸. Yet their high technical quality, of a standard unknown in Georgian enamels of this period, and their Greek inscriptions, incline us towards a Byzantine provenance, whereas their stylistic characteristics would suggest a date earlier than the twelfth century³⁹. The way the drapery folds are depicted ending in hooks is similar to techniques of the tenth century, but the density of the folds leads, in my view, to a date in the first half of the eleventh century. There are similarities with some of the enamelled roundels decorating the Cross of Zavis⁴⁰ (the apostles Peter and Paul and the evangelists Luke and John) and the enamels decorating the outer faces of the wings of the Stavelot Reliquary Triptych (evangelists)⁴¹, works which are likewise dated to the eleventh century.

The dimensions, the technique and the stylistic features of the figures in the enamels listed above as belonging to Groups III and IV lead to the clear conclusion that they are products of one and the same workshop and all date to the same period, just as their subject matter leads us to conclude that they come from two different objects⁴².

Group III. As may be deduced from their stylistic characteristics, the nine frontal busts of the apostles and the roundel of Christ from the centre of the lower part of the right-hand wing of the Triptych come from the same object. These ten enamels, which I will call Group III, decorated the frame of some luxury icon, which probably had the Virgin as its central image. Their arrangement would have been similar to that suggested by M. Frazer⁴³ for the Djumati enamels, now part of the Metropolitan Museum's collection in New York. Mainly on the basis of a hierarchical arrangement of the figures, and the alternation in the colours of the haloes, I propose the following arrangement (Fig. 9): in the middle of the upper part of the frame would have been the image of Christ, looking out towards the viewer, flanked by medallions of the apostles Peter, on the left, and Paul (now lost) on

34. M. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Medieval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, II, Washington, D.C. 1965, no. 154, p. 105-106, pl. LXIX, LXX.

35. *The Glory of Byzantium*, op. cit., no. 234, p. 346, fig. 234 (St George) and Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, no. 137, p. 96 (St Theodore).

36. Wessel, *Email Kunst*, no. 45, p. 129-130.

37. Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, nos 89-105, p. 73-78.

38. Amiranashvili, *Les émaux*, p. 120, and Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, p. 73-78 propose a date in the twelfth century and consider them to be products of a Georgian workshop.

39. The roundel with the bust of St Peter has been dated by Wessel to the tenth century (Wessel, *Email Kunst*, no. 24, p. 81) which necessarily applies to the other enamels in Groups III and IV.

40. P. Hetherington, *The Cross of Zavis and its Byzantine Enamels: A Contribution to its History*, in *Θνμίαμα στη μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα*, Athens 1994, p. 121. See also the photographs in Wessel, *Email Kunst*, figs 50b, 50d-50e.

41. Wessel, *Email Kunst*, fig. 47c. Voelke, *The Stavelot Triptych*, p. 20-21, fig. 6. See also P. Lasko, *Ars Sacra 800-1200*, New Haven-London 1994, p. 194, fig. 266.

42. Amiranashvili, *Les émaux*, p. 120, believes that these enamels come from two contemporary groups.

43. Margaret E. Frazer, *The Djumati Enamels: A Twelfth-Century Litany of Saints*, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 28, no. 6 (Feb. 1970), p. 240-251.

the right. Below Peter would have been St Luke and opposite him another enamel roundel depicting St Mark (no longer extant), the two mature evangelists. Underneath St Luke would have been St John the Evangelist with St Matthew opposite him, the two elderly evangelists. The two youthful figures of the apostles Philip and Thomas would have filled the corresponding positions beneath them. The mature figure of Simon would have been placed on the left-hand side of the bottom part of the frame with the equally mature St James in the middle and the elderly apostle Andrew on the right. This sequence which emphasizes the hierarchy within the figures manages at the same time to produce the necessary alternation in the colours of the haloes.

Group IV. Six round enamels can be classified in the same group, which I shall call Group IV. The Virgin and St John the Baptist with their hands outstretched in gestures of intercession were probably combined with one of the roundels bearing an image of Christ. It is most likely that they are to be teamed up with a roundel of Christ now in the centre of the lower part of the left-hand wing, a hypothesis which relies entirely on their stylistic characteristics. The three enamels with the images of the apostle Simon and the two evangelists Matthew and John, who are all turning towards the centre, are part of this group. As mentioned above, these last three apostles are depicted twice. Like the enamels in the previous group, these too, along with six others, which are now lost, are likely to have decorated the frame of some other luxury icon with a central image of Christ or a saint. On the basis of the iconography, the stance of the figures and the direction of their gaze, which seems to have been consistently maintained by the artist, I propose the following arrangement of the enamels on the icon frame that I believe they come from (Fig. 10). The image of Christ looking towards the viewer would have been in the centre of the upper part, with St John the Baptist in the upper left-hand corner and the Virgin on the upper right. Below the Baptist would have been the evangelist Matthew, turning to the right and, below the Virgin, St John the Evangelist, turning to the left. These two elderly figures are turning towards the central image. The next two places underneath would be occupied by

the roundels with the mature figures of the other two evangelists, Luke and Mark. The roundel with the image of the apostle Simon turning to the left would be placed in the penultimate space on the right hand side of the frame. The reversal of the usual positions of the Virgin and St John the Baptist in the Deesis is a peculiarity mostly found in works of the second half of the tenth century⁴⁴.

As mentioned above there were three more enamels, which were replaced with modern ones in the early twentieth century. These enamels would have had a place on one of the aforementioned objects. The third roundel with the image of Christ probably came from a third work, from the same period and workshop, the exact nature of which it is no longer possible to ascertain.

Group V. Six enamels, all set on the central panel, make up Group V. They are: the rectangular plaque (7.4×7.2 cm.) in which Christ is crowning the Byzantine Emperor Michael VII Doukas and his consort Maria of Alania, the two rectangular plaques with the images of the Virgin (8.1×4 cm.) and of John the Baptist (8×4.2cm.), the round-topped rectangular plaque with the image of the enthroned Christ (7×4.5 cm.), and the two rectangular plaques with the archangels Michael and Gabriel (7.9×3.5 cm.) (Figs 3-4)⁴⁵. The plaque that represents the crowning of the imperial couple is placed at the very top of the Triptych and occupies the most important position in relation to the other enamels. The other five plaques have been set in distinctive surrounds so as to underline their importance and make them stand out from the other enamels on the Triptych. All six pieces share a series of features: the way in which the necks and the facial features (nose, eyes, mouth) are delineated is the same in all the figures; the footstools on which the archangels stand are the same as those used for the imperial couple; the image of the enthroned Christ is identical with that of the Christ crowning the emperor and empress. Finally, the script is the same on each of the six enamels.

The enamel with the coronation of Maria of Alania and Michael VII Doukas is the biggest of the pieces and, as it is set on the upper part of the central panel, it is visible whether

44. On the Limburg Reliquary and on the Cross of John Tzimiskes in the Great Lavra on Athos, see N. Ševčenko, *op.cit.* (n. 22), p. 293, n. 38; on the three ivory triptychs in the Vatican Museo Sacro, the Palazzo Venezia in Rome and the Louvre in Paris, see A. Cutler, *Inscriptions and Iconography on Some Middle Byzantine Ivories. I. The Monuments and their Dating*, in *Scritture, Libri e Testi nelle Aree Provinciali di Bizanzio. Atti del seminario di Erice* (ed. G. Cavallo, G. de Gregorio, M.

Maniaci), Spoleto 1991, p. 645-659, figs 6a, 5.a, 7a, respectively.

45. Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, nos 39-42, p. 43-44, nos 61-62, p. 55. These enamels were first grouped together by Gordeev, *Emalej Hahulskogo*, p. 154. Amiranashvili, *Les émaux*, p. 102, considers the three enamels with the images of Christ, the Virgin and John the Baptist were made in Constantinople and connected with Maria of Alania.

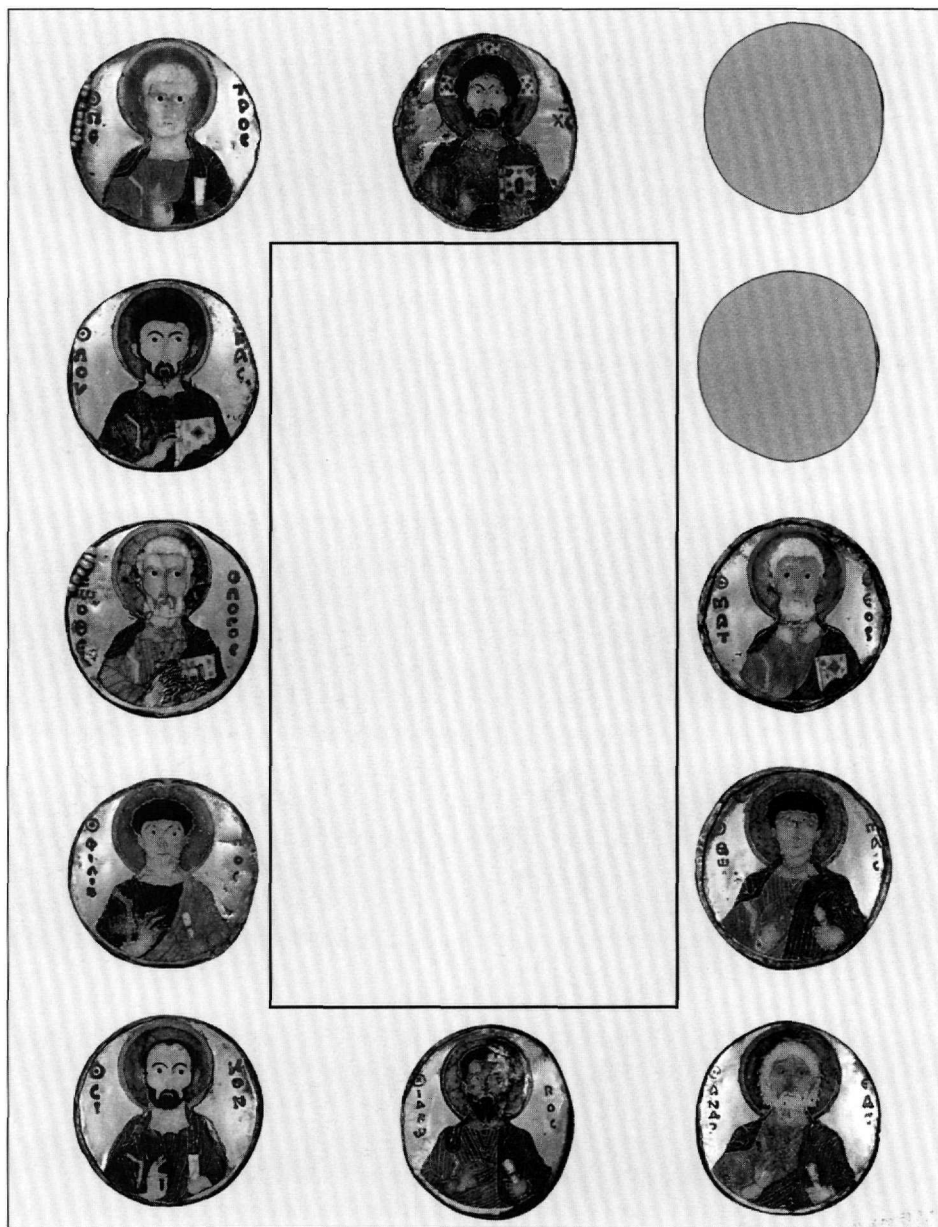


Fig. 9. Proposed arrangement of the enamels of Group III on an icon frame.

the Triptych is open or shut. Its privileged position is due to its subject matter, showing as it does the eminent position that this Georgian princess had achieved as Empress of Byzantium. The direct relationship between the earthly and heavenly rulers is made clear by the way in which Christ is shown crowning the imperial couple in person, and confirmed by the inscription in which He says: *I crown Michael and Mariam by my own hands*⁴⁶. The reign of Michael VII Doukas provides a *terminus post quem* of 1071 (date of his ac-

cession to the throne) and a *terminus ante quem* of 1078 (when he fell from power) for the enamels of Group V.

46. The inscription accompanying the coronation of Constantine Doukas and Eudocia on the octagonal reliquary of St Demetrios in the Kremlin Museum also refers to the direct involvement of Christ in crowning the couple. See A. Bank, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums*, Leningrad 1985, p. 308, figs 202-203.

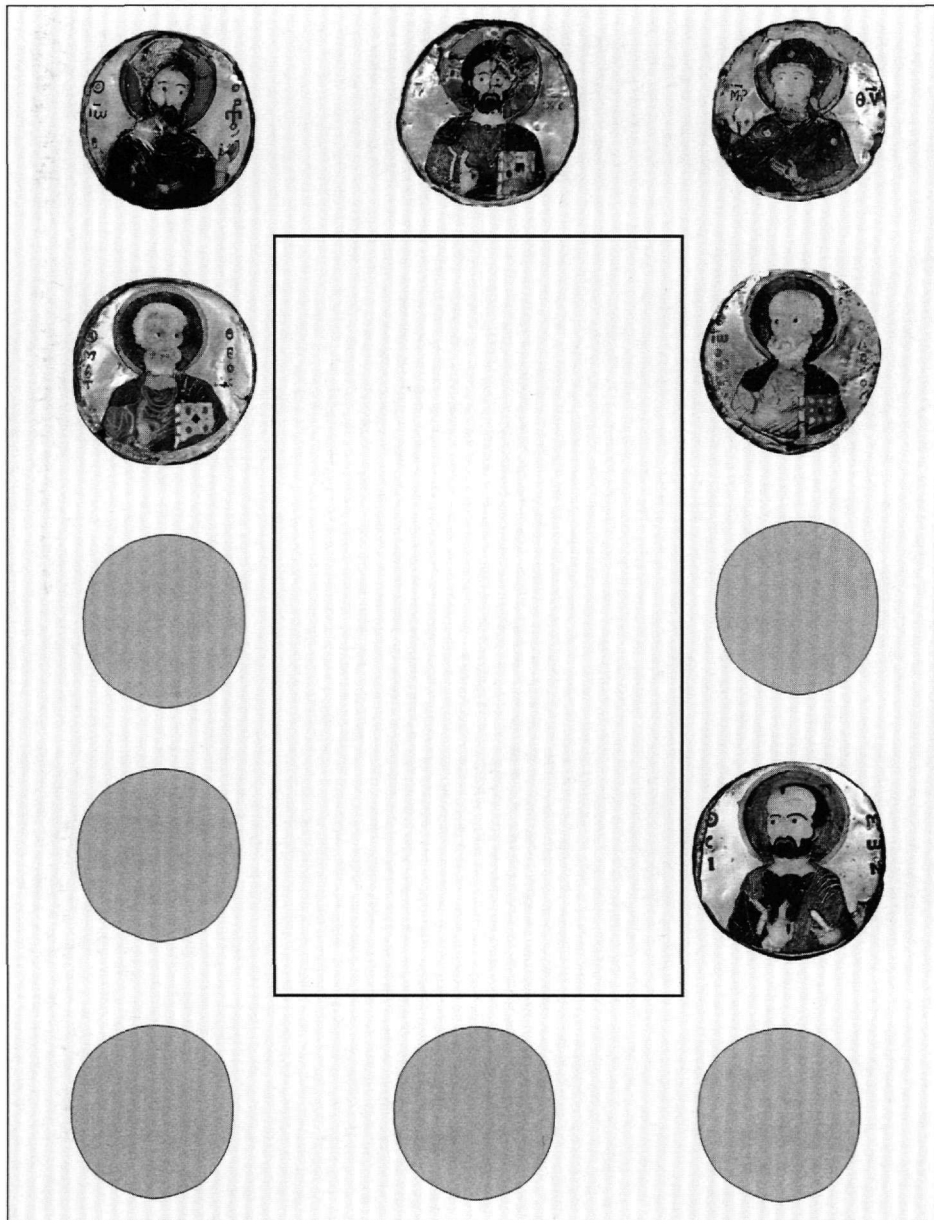


Fig. 10. Proposed arrangement of the enamels of Group IV on an icon frame.

But what sort of object were these six enamels created for originally? The iconography of an imperial coronation suggests a luxury object, which could have been a votive crown. I therefore propose the following arrangement of the enamels (Fig. 11): at the front of the crown the enamel with the enthroned Christ would have been placed in the centre with the standing figures of the Virgin and St John the Baptist in intercessory poses to the left and right respectively. The enamel with the image of the enthroned Christ would have been

set higher than the other enamels. Its rounded top would be appropriate for just such an object and its elevated position could explain why the Virgin and St John are turning their gaze upwards, as well as the inclusion of an arc of heaven on these two enamels⁴⁷. On the back, the enamel with the coro-

47. Wessel, *Email Kunst*, no. 34, p. 110, dates the enamel with the enthroned Pantokrator to the eleventh century and compares it with the

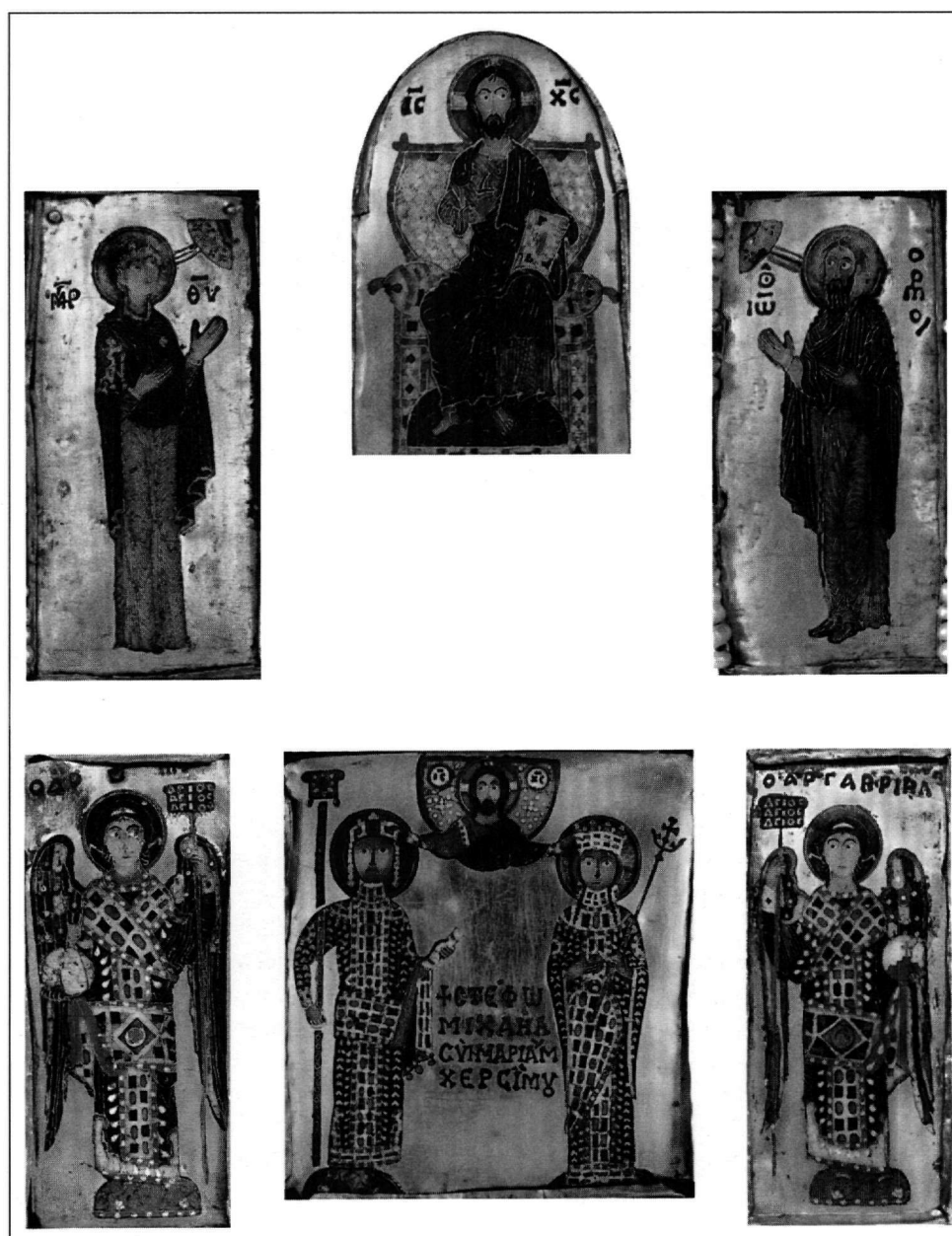


Fig. 11. Proposed arrangement of the enamels of Group V on a crown. Above: front view of crown. Below: back view of crown.

nation would have been placed at the centre with the Archangel Michael on the left and the Archangel Gabriel on the right. Archangel Michael is turning his gaze to the right that is towards the Emperor Michael VII Doukas, while Gabriel is turning his gaze to the left, where Princess Maria of Alania was standing. Archangel Michael is depicted also with his namesake, the Emperor Michael VII in the Paris. cod. Coislin 79, which was produced as a gift for the Emperor⁴⁸.

enthroned Pantokrator on the crown of Hungary. Though he points out that it could come from a crown on account of its shape, he separates it from the images of the Virgin and the Baptist believing them to be unconnected, given that each of the two figures is praying to an arc of heaven—depicted in the upper corner— from which rays of light stream down.

48. J. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*, Leiden 1976, p. 107-118, esp. p. 112.

The Archangel Gabriel, a protagonist in the Annunciation to the Virgin, may be seen as representing an aide to Maria who announces the likely birth of heirs to the Emperor Michael on the occasion of her coronation. The foregoing arrangement provides two independent but complementary groupings, which are intended to emphasize the exceptional goodwill of the holy personages towards the emperors and the special relationship between them. It was perhaps the best gift that could have been sent to Maria's birthplace. My hypothesis concerning the nature of the object for which these six enamels were created may be challenged, but one thing is certain: this object was the most important relic in Davit IV's and Demetre I's collections. This is evident from the special surrounds which were created on the Triptych for the plaques that had once belonged to this object and the eminence they were given in the Khakhuli Triptych's decoration.

The three enamels with the enthroned Christ, the Virgin and St John the Baptist are closely related in stylistic terms, iconographically and as regards their technique with a depiction of a Deesis on an enamel decorating the cover of a box in the Vatican's Museo Sacro, known as the Santa Prassede Reliquary, which is also dated to the eleventh century (Fig. 12)⁴⁹. It seems likely to be a work from the same workshop, given the identical handling of the drapery folds, the treatment of the facial features, the decoration of the throne and the script used for the inscriptions.

Group VI. Five enamels, situated directly beneath the central icon, clearly come from the same grouping, which I shall call Group VI. They are: a semicircular plaque with the figure of Christ Pantokrator seated on a rainbow (2.5×6 cm.), flanked by four square plaques of identical dimensions (3×3 cm.) with busts of the Virgin, the Archangel Michael and two military saints, Demetrios and George⁵⁰.

The Archangel Michael, who is turning towards the right and the Virgin, who is turning to the left, are each holding a crown. From the shape of the crowns one can easily deduce that the one held by the Archangel Michael is intended for a man, while that held by the Virgin is intended for a wo-



Fig. 12. Santa Prassede Reliquary. Museo Sacro, Vatican (from: *I Bizantini in Italia*).

man. St George is turning his gaze to the right, while St Demetrios looks to the left. The symmetrically opposed gestures of the four figures, the directions in which the figures of the Virgin and the Archangel are turning, the direction of the gaze of the two military saints and the presence of the two crowns can only be explained if we accept that they framed two other figures (one male and one female) on the object for which they were originally created. These figures, to whom they are offering the crowns and towards whom they look and gesture, were most probably the Emperor Michael VII Doukas and the Empress Maria of Alania. The archangel Michael and the Virgin are confronting their imperial namesakes, Michael and Maria, with crowns in their hands. Thus the enamels of Group VI seem likely to come from a diadem arranged in the following manner (Fig. 13). The semicircular plaque with the figure of Christ was probably placed higher than the other enamels. Below Christ there would have been two identically-sized plaques with busts of Michael VII Doukas and Maria of Alania. The plaque with the Archangel Michael would have been on the right of his namesake, the emperor, while the plaque with the Virgin would have been on the left of her namesake, Maria. This hypothesis is also supported by the way in

49. F. Stohlman, *Gli Smalti del Museo Sacro Vaticano, Catalogo del Museo Sacro*, II, Città del Vaticano 1939, no. 104, p. 48, pl. XXVII. R. Farioli Campanati, La cultura artistica nelle regioni bizantine d'Italia dal VI all'XI secolo, in *I Bizantini in Italia*, Milan 1982, no. 246, p. 418-419, fig. 237. *Splendori di Bisanzio* (ed. G. Morello), Exhibition Catalogue, Milan 1990, no 69, p. 178-179.

50. Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, nos 56-60, p. 52-54. These four enamels were considered to belong to one group by Gordeev, *Emalej Hahulskogo*, p. 156-157, in which, however, the enamel of Christ was not included. See also A. Mikaberidze, Die byzantinische Kaiserin Maria-Martha im Lichte neuerer archäologischer Ausgrabungen, in *Byzantinische Malerei* (ed. G. Koch), Wiesbaden 2000, p. 201-202.

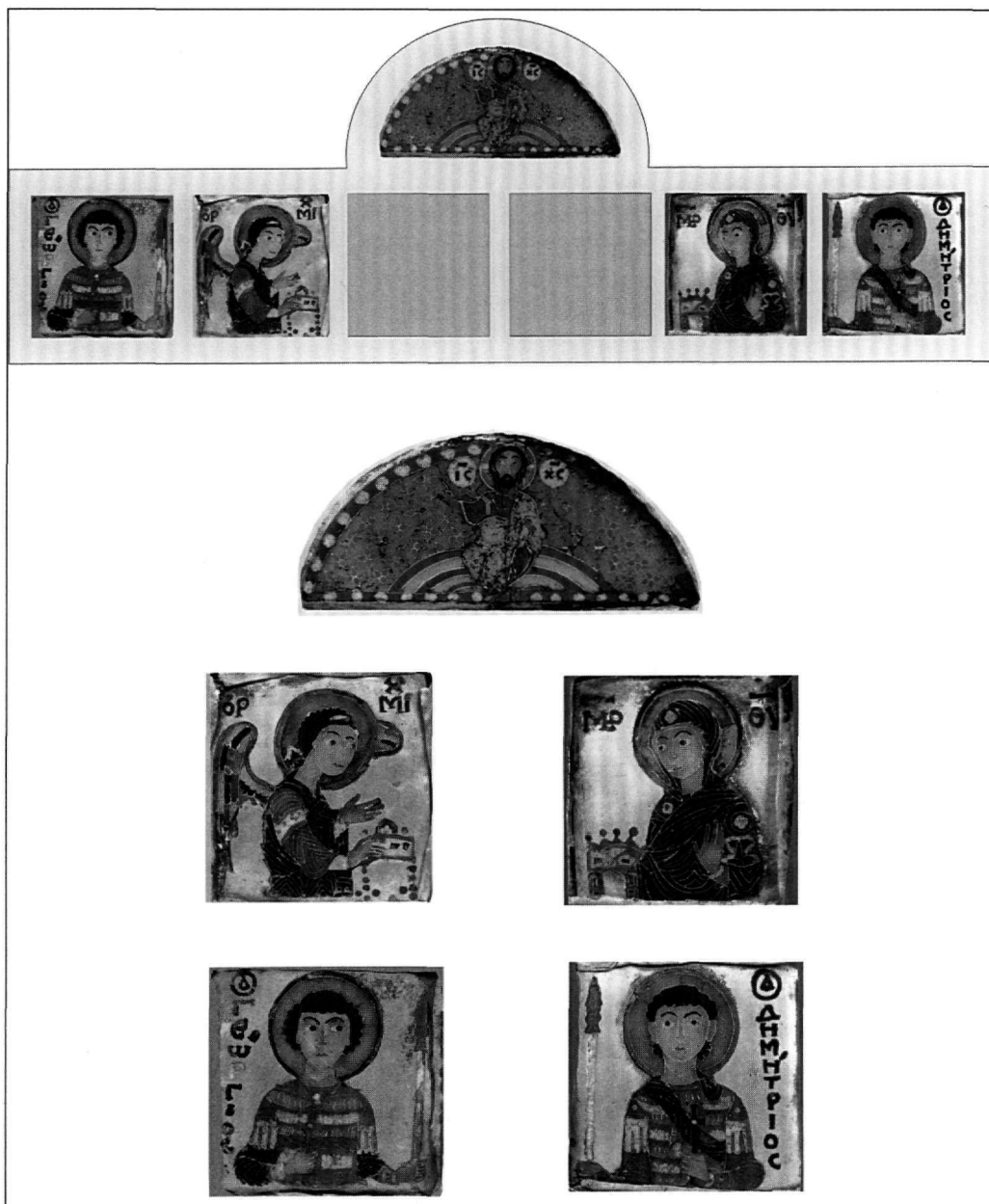


Fig. 13. Above: proposed arrangement of the enamels of Group VI on a crown. Below: enamels of group VI.

which Christ is looking to the left that is towards the spot where the image of the Byzantine emperor would have been.

There is, an impressive similarity between the enamels of Groups V and VI as regards technique and their iconography, which is entirely consistent with the theme of the coronation of Michael VII Doukas and Maria of Alania. Thus we are led to the conclusion that they come from the same

workshop and that the enamels of Group VI too can be dated after the year 1071. It might also be tempting to claim that the enamels of Groups V and VI once formed part of the same composition. However, their iconographic features would not support this hypothesis. A single work containing two images of the Virgin, two of the Archangel Michael and three of Christ Pantokrator (including the one in which he is crowning the imperial couple) is excessive, in



Fig. 14. The crown of St. Stephen. National Museum, Budapest.

my opinion, for a Byzantine composition, normally based on rules of symmetry and non-repetition of figures. Moreover in the enamel from Group V, the imperial couple are crowned by the hand of Christ himself, without the intervention of any intermediaries. By contrast in Group VI the coronation is performed through the good offices of the Archangel Michael and the Virgin. Thus we must be dealing with another art object sent, like the previous one, as a gift to Georgia on the occasion of the coronation of the Byzantine emperor and the Georgian princess. So the enamels of Groups V and VI are from objects directly connected with Maria of Alania, or in other words, King Davit's aunt. When these enamels were removed from their original settings in order to be incorporated in the decoration of the Triptych they were already at least fifty years old.

On the *corona graeca* crown of Hungary (St Stephen's crown) (Fig. 14), there are ten figurative enamels: at the front there is an image of the enthroned Christ with images of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and the military saints George and Demetrios below it, whereas on the back there is an image of the Byzantine Emperor Michael VII Doukas with images of the porphyrogennetos Constantine Doukas, the Hungarian

ruler Geza I and the Anargyroi, Sts Cosmas and Damian below⁵¹. The crown is precisely dated to the years 1074-1077, and was sent from the Byzantine emperor to the Hungarian ruler as a diplomatic gift⁵². The similarities between the enamels of the crown of Hungary and the enamels of Groups V and VI, the fact that they were made in more or less the same period and above all the type of object involved, lead us to the conclusion that they are products of the same workshop.

Group VII. Of all the enamels decorating the Khakhuli Triptych, only seven rectangular plaques of identical dimensions (4.3×3.5 cm.) were added after the completion of its decorative programme: I shall call these enamels Group VII. There are four plaques with the four images of the evangelists and three with images of the church fathers, Sts

51. On the crown of Hungary see J. Deér, *Die heilige Krone Ungarns*, Vienna 1966.

52. See R. Cormack, But is it Art? in *Byzantine Diplomacy* (ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin), London 1992, p. 230-231.

Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Nicholas⁵³ (Figs 3-4). Their dimensions, their stylistic similarities and their technique are all in favour of their coming from the same original composition, subsequently dismantled in order to re-use the enamels on the Khakhuli Triptych. Their stylistic characteristics suggest a date towards the end of the eleventh century and an attribution to a Byzantine workshop. Mainly on the basis of their iconography (evangelists and church fathers) the work of art for which they were originally created might be a luxury binding for a service book. Yet such a programme would presuppose a greater number of enamels than this, from which we must assume, unless the rest had already been lost, that just these seven enamels were chosen. So, perhaps the enamels of Group VII come from an object whose decoration required a smaller number of enamels from the outset, for example a small triptych, such as the Stavelot Reliquary Triptych⁵⁴. Since all the figures are turned so as to face one another or towards a [hypothetical] central figure, I propose the following arrangement for the enamels of Group VII on a triptych (Fig. 15). On the external faces of the wings of the triptych would be the four evangelists, placed in such a way as to be looking towards the centre. On the left wing St John the Evangelist would be placed in the upper part and St Luke in the lower, while on the right wing St Matthew would occupy the upper half with St Mark below. Thus the elderly figures of St John the Evangelist and St Matthew would confront one another in the upper part, while the mature figures of St Luke and St Mark would be facing one another below. The former have green haloes and the latter blue. The gospel books held by St John and St Matthew are inscribed with letters. The positions of their hands are also symmetrical.

On the inner faces of the wings would have been four more plaques with church fathers. By the same logic, Sts Basil and Nicholas would have occupied the upper and lower places respectively on the left-hand wing, while St Gregory would have been set beneath a no longer extant figure on the right-hand wing. Thus the elderly faces of Nicholas and Gregory with their green haloes would have been facing one another, while the mature face of St Basil with his blue halo would have been paired with another church father of mature years, probably St John Chrysostom, who would also have had a blue halo. Sts Nicholas and Gregory are depicted in the same stance with

the same gestures. The missing hierarch would have been depicted in a similar manner to St Basil. This object was not in Davit's or Demetre's possession when the decoration of the Khakhuli Triptych was being planned and executed. The decision to dismantle it and add its enamels to the decoration of the Triptych was probably taken by Demetre's heirs, Giorgi III (1156-1184) or Tamar (1184-1222), thus making their own contribution to the decoration of the Triptych.

The central images from the two large-scale, luxury icons and the small triptych for which I suggested reconstructions above were not selected to become part of the decorative programme of the Khakhuli Triptych. Probably their iconography and their dimensions would have rendered them unsuitable to be part of the overall composition of the Triptych, which is organized symmetrically and with a connecting thread running through the iconography of the various sub-groups of enamels. For example a large-scale icon of the Virgin would be redundant on the Triptych and would effectively be competing against the central devotional image. Moreover, if the enamels of Group VI came from a crown which would undoubtedly have contained images of the Emperor Michael VII and Maria of Alania, there would have been no reason to include these in the decoration of the Triptych on two counts: on the one hand, there was already the enamel from Group V which stressed the important position of Maria of Alania as consort of a Byzantine emperor and her direct relationship with Christ; on the other hand, another plaque depicting Michael VII Doukas, especially on his own, would be tantamount to an admission of a dependent relationship between the Georgian rulers and the Byzantine empire, something which Demetre I probably sought to avoid, especially as he had not sought to include an image of himself on the Triptych.

The luxury objects from which the enamels, all Byzantine in style, were taken, must, I think, have been gifts sent by Byzantine emperors to the Georgian rulers. The Byzantine custom of decorating precious objects with enamels is well known: crowns, reliquaries, icon covers, book covers, liturgical and secular vessels. Embassies, treaties or marriages were all accompanied by such diplomatic gifts⁵⁵. Relationships between equals or near equals were created and sealed with exchanges of diplomatic gifts. Between individuals or

53. Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, nos 46-49, p. 46-47, nos 53-53, p. 49. Gordeev was the first to group these enamels together. *Ibid.*, Emalej Hahulskogo, p. 156.

54. Wessel, *Email Kunst*, no. 47, p. 155-159. Voelkle, *Stavelot Triptych*,

p. 21-22, figs 6-7.

55. See Ruth Makrides, *Dynastic Marriages and Political Kinship*, in *Byzantine Diplomacy* (ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin), London 1992, p. 273ff.

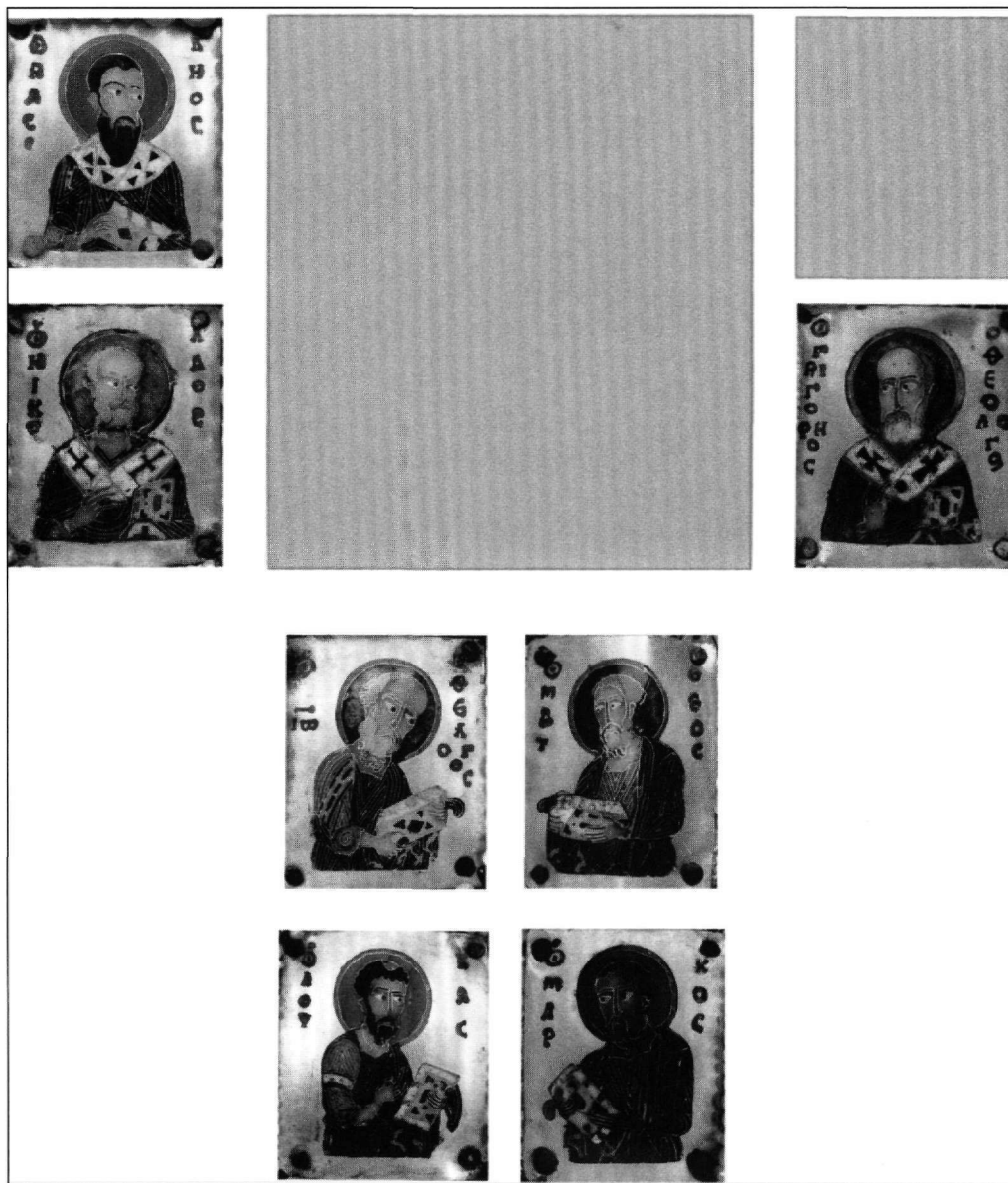


Fig. 15. Proposed arrangement of the enamels of Group VII on a triptych.

groups of differing status it was the inequality in the exchanges that articulated and defined the objective and the appropriate degree of subjection⁵⁶. The purpose of gift-giv-

ing in this case was not the accumulation of wealth, but the establishment of ties between the giver and the receiver, ties which to some extent had to be ratified by a return gift⁵⁷.

56. See P. Grierson, Commerce in the Dark Ages: A Critique of the Evidence, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1959), p. 130-139. P. Garry, Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics, in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (ed. A. Appadurai), Cambridge 1986, p. 172-173; see also A. Appadurai, Introduc-

tion: Commodities and the Politics of Value, in *op.cit. supra*, p. 3-6.

57. See the fundamental work by Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le Don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*, *Année sociologique* 1 (1923-1924).



Fig. 16. The two sides of the Cross of the magistros Kvirike, from the left and right wings of the Khakhuli Triptych.

Occasions such as the embassy of Miriam, wife of King George I, to Constantinople in 1030, the wedding of Helena, niece of the Emperor Romanos Argyros to King Bagrat IV in 1032, the marriage of Maria of Alania, daughter of Bagrat IV, to the Emperor Michael VII Doukas in 1071 or her cousin Irene, the daughter of Demetre (brother of Bagrat IV), to Isaac Komnenos in 1076, or the marriage of Katai, daughter of Davit IV to Alexios, son of Anna Komnena and Nikephoros Bryennios in 1116-18⁵⁸, kept the policy of reciprocal gift-giving between Byzantine and Georgian ruling houses alive all through the eleventh century and into the beginning of the twelfth. Indeed Psellos tells us that in the course of an affair between the Emperor Constantine Monomachos and an unnamed Alanian Princess: [...] once

again all our treasures were frittered away. Some were scattered around inside the walls of Constantinople, while other were sent off to the barbarian kingdoms. For the first time ever the land of the Alanians was suffering from a surfeit of good things sent from Constantinople. [Their] ships sailed into our harbour and, when they put to sea again, they were fully loaded with precious objects belonging to us, things that once made the Roman Empire an object of envy⁵⁹.

The two crosses of identical dimensions set into the lower part of the wings of the Triptych were originally the two sides of an enamelled cross (12.8×9.3 cm.) with a crucifixion on one side and St John the Baptist with Sts Peter and Paul and two evangelists on the other (Fig. 16). On either side of the figure of St John the Baptist there is an inscription in

58. On the embassy of Queen Miriam to Constantinople see John Scylitzes (ed. I. Thurn), Berlin 1972, p. 377.19-25. See also Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 287. The marriage of Irene, cousin of Maria of Alania to Isaac Comnenos, brother of the Emperor Alexios Comnenos is mentioned by Nikephoros Bryennios (ed. P. Gautier), Brussels 1975, p. 143.9-13 and by Anna Comnena (ed. B. Leib), I, Paris 1937, ch. II, p. 64.24-26. The marriage between Anna Comnena's son and Katai is mentioned by John Zonaras (ed. M. Büttner-Wobst), III, Bonn 1897, p. 761.19-21; see also R. Makrides, *op.cit.* (n. 55), p. 270-271. This marriage is also mentioned in the Georgian Chronicle, see Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History*, p. 325.

59. Michael Psellos (ed. E. Renauld), II, Paris 1967, p. 46: Αὐτοῖς οὖν

ἐσπαθᾶτο πάντα καὶ διεφθείρετο, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐντὸς τῶν τειχῶν διεσκήδναντο, τὰ δὲ ἐξαγωγήμα εἰς τὴν βάρβαρον ἦν. Καὶ τότε πρῶτως ἢ τῶν Ἀλανῶν γῇ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμετέρας Ῥώμης ἐμπέπληστο ἀγαθῶν κατήγοντο οὖν νῆες καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀνήγοντο φορτίδες ὅλαι τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν τιμίων καὶ οἷς πάλαι τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐξηλοῦτο βασιλεῖον. C. Toumanoff, *Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour l'histoire de la Caucasic chrétienne (Arménie - Géorgie - Albanie)*, Rome 1976, p. 123, identifies Constantine's sweetheart with the woman who was to become the wife of Isaac Comnenos. On the relationship of Irene to Maria of Alania see J.F. Vannier, *Notes généalogiques byzantino-géorgiennes*, in *Εὐψυχία: Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, II, Paris 1998, p. 677-678.

Greek, identical in colour and in paleography with the other Greek inscriptions on the cross, which says: *Lord help thy servant Kvirike the magistros* [Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Κυρίκων μαγίστρῳ]. A second inscription (a later addition) written in a different colour and in Georgian, refers to the owner of this object as a king. Its stylistic characteristics lead us to date the cross to the early eleventh century, while its exceptionally high quality makes it one of the finest products of the Byzantine workshops⁶⁰. Kvirike could be identified as the Georgian ruler Kvirike/Gourgen I (994-1008), who held the title of *magistros* in the period 1000-1008, or with the ruler of Kakheti and Hereti, Kvirike III (1010-1029)⁶¹. The cross must have been given as a gift by the Byzantine Emperor Basil II to Kvirike, at the same time as he bestowed the title of *magistros* on him, and Kvirike added the second inscription in his own language, entitling himself king. The fact that the cross belonged to Davit IV in the twelfth century shows that such precious objects were treasured and handed down from one generation to the next.

All the above observations concerning the grouping of the most important figurative enamels from the Khakhuli Triptych and their original arrangement on luxury objects of Byzantine provenance dating to the tenth and eleventh century indicate that Davit IV had a plan, which was realized by Demetre I, to use the enamels from the heirlooms in his possession to decorate the Triptych. The question as to why Davit IV and subsequently Demetre I did not order new enamels can, I think, be answered quite satisfactorily. Apart from their aesthetic quality, which was unparalleled among the enamels being made in Georgia at that time, the heirlooms used to decorate the Khakhuli Triptych had greater social prestige than any new ones could have had. They emphasized both the accumulated wealth of the dynasty of Georgian rulers as well as their diplomatic and familial relationships with the Byzantine emperors. This explains the fact that the decoration of the Triptych included so many groups of enamels, often with the same iconographic subjects and dozens of decorative enamel or filigree plaques, which obviously come from dismantled objects. The choice of Byzantine enamels to decorate the Triptych together with the conspicuous positions in which some of them are set, in

particular the enamel with the coronation of Maria of Alania, in relation to the overall decorative programme, make it plain that Demetre's aesthetic preferences in the early years of his reign were consciously oriented towards Byzantium and were part of the identity he wished to construct for himself.

The Georgian Chronicle tells us that, after her victory at Samcor against the Turks, Demetre I's granddaughter, Queen Tamar (1184-1212) sent the greater part of the spoils ahead to the icon of the Virgin of Khakhuli, as her father and grandfather had done⁶². This shows just how continuously the cult of the Virgin of Khakhuli was observed by all the descendants of Davit IV. Historical sources and documents of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tell us about the gifts from Georgian rulers to the icon enclosed in the Triptych⁶³. Large tracts of land were offered up to the icon, taxes were collected in her honour and exemption from other taxes were granted to those paying dues to the icon, gold lamps were dedicated to the icon as ex-votos as well as precious stones and jewels and it was set up as an enduring symbol of all the possible exchanges between mortals and divine beings.

Such an object could not possibly escape the nineteenth century's mania for collecting. In 1859 the icon of the Virgin was stolen from the Khakhuli Triptych, which made it necessary to create a copy, which took the place of the original in 1863. This is a painted icon of an Hagiosoritissa, with metal cladding that leaves only the face and hands of the Virgin uncovered⁶⁴, as a drawing made from a contemporary photograph and published by Kondakov in 1892 shows (Fig. 17). In 1952, when the Khakhuli Triptych came to the National Museum of Art in Tbilisi, the 1863 copy was removed and replaced with a plain base on which an basic drawing was made in the shape of the Virgin and to which were added a face and hands in enamel (12×7 cm. and 9×5 cm. respectively) from the original icon, which had arrived in the Botkin Collection some time before 1892 (Fig. 18) and which were returned to the Tbilisi Museum in 1923⁶⁵.

In the description of the central icon on the Triptych by the ambassador Nikephoros Tolotschanow written in 1650, as published by Kondakov, he mentions that the hands and

60. According to Kondakov, *Émaux byzantins*, p. 132 the cross is a work of the eleventh century, whereas for Amiranashvili, *Les émaux*, p. 114-115 and Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, nos 29-30, p. 37, it is a tenth-century work made in Georgia.

61. On the Georgian rulers Kvirike/Gourgen I and Kvirike III see C.

Toumanoff, *op.cit.* (n. 59), p. 118 and 184 respectively.

62. Kenia, *Khakhuli*, p. 25.

63. *Idem*, p. 25-26.

64. *Idem*, p. 108.

65. *Loc.cit.*, *supra*. Khuskivadze, *Cloisonné Enamels*, no. 16, p. 30.



Fig. 17. Sketch of the Khakhuli Triptych (from Kondakov: *Émaux byzantins*).

face of the Virgin were most beautifully painted and extremely white and that the icon was decorated with rubies, emeralds and diamonds⁶⁶. On account of the three large, precious stones that were set into the head of the Virgin, Brosset, who had also seen the icon before it was stolen in 1859, recounts a tale whereby these precious stones came from the crown of Queen Tamar, who was also supposed to have contributed to the decoration of the icon⁶⁷. For these precious stones to have been set into the image of the Virgin, it would have to have been placed against a gold or silver gilt ground decorated with enamels and embossed decoration, or have been clad in a silver gilt cover.

The dimensions of the central icon with the image of the Virgin are 54×41 cm. which makes it the biggest enamel icon to have come down to us, if only in fragments. The two famous Byzantine icons of the Archangel Michael now in the Treasury of St Mark's in Venice are smaller and the first is dated to the second half of the tenth century and the second to the twelfth century. The bust of the Archangel measures 44×36 cm. including the frame⁶⁸, whereas the full-length Archangel measures 46×35 cm.⁶⁹. The central enamel in the uppermost band of the Pala d' Oro, with the image of the Archangel Michael which is dated to the second quarter of the twelfth century⁷⁰, measures 44×39 cm. It is with

66. Kondakov, *Émaux byzantins*, p. 123.

67. Brosset, *op.cit.* (n. 9) p. 20.

68. *Le Trésor de Saint-Marc*, *op.cit.* (n. 26), p. 141-147, figs 142, 144.

69. *Idem*, p. 171-174, figs 172-173.

70. *La Pala d'Oro*, *op.cit.* (n. 16), no. 79, p. 39, pl. XLII.

this enamel, which was plundered by the crusaders in 1204, that the Khakhuli Virgin has the most in common. The face and hands of the two figures have been made in the same way and they are characterized by the same animated yet stern expressions. Looking at the Byzantine luxury icons now in Venice, one realizes that the Khakhuli Virgin belonged to the same category of objects and it is easy to imagine the impression it made in its original form.

The iconographic type of the Virgin is either a Hagiosoritissa or a Chymeute, as depicted on an early twelfth-century icon painted by the Georgian Priest Monk Ioannes Tsochabi who donated it to the monastery of St Catherine's on Sinai⁷¹. In the upper part of the icon, Ioannes Tsochabi painted four devotional images of the Virgin: on the left the Vlachernitissa and the Hodegitria and on the right the Hagiosoritissa and the Chymeute. They are all famous icons, which were in Constantinople, which the artist must have seen, the real thing or copies. The Hagiosoritissa is one of two devotional icons kept with the Hagia Soros, either the shrine in which the Virgin's girdle was kept in the church of the Chalkoprateia or the shrine in which her maphorion was kept in the church of the Vlachernai in Constantinople⁷². The Chymeute (the epithet refers to the technique and not to the church in which it was kept) differs from the Hagiosoritissa as regards the position of the hands and the turn of the head. It is probably to be identified with the enamel icon of the Theotokos which, according to Constantine Porphyrogenetos, was in the church of St Demetrios next to the Theotokos of the Pharos in the Great Palace of Constantinople⁷³. If we take into account the artist's Georgian origin and the enamelled technique of the Khakhuli Virgin, which was already well known by that period, it is very reasonable to assume that Ioannes Tsochabi, while painting the icon he later donated to St Catherine's, had the Khakhuli Virgin in mind. The similarities between the Khakhuli Virgin and the Archangel Michael on the Pala d'Oro, in quality and size, the way in which the facial features are depicted, but above all the very nature of the Khakhuli Virgin as a luxury devotional object lead me to suppose that this icon was not created in tenth-century Georgia, as has been maintained, but in eleventh-century Constantinople, and that it was a precious

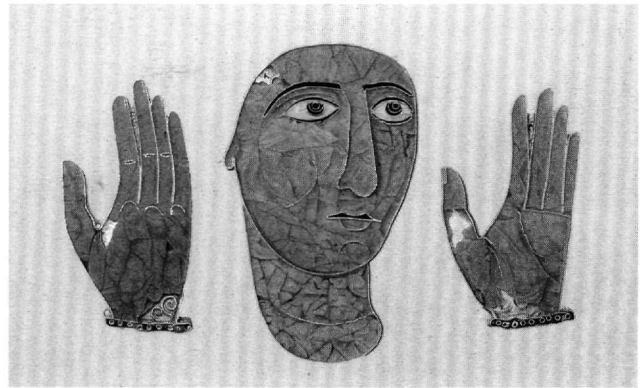


Fig. 18. The enamels from the Panagia of Khakhuli in the Botkin Collection (from Kondakov: *Émaux byzantins*).

gift from the Byzantines to the Georgians. Such a gift is most likely to have been connected with an embassy or the marriage of one of the Georgian ruling dynasty of the eleventh century, and more particularly of Maria of Alania who, moreover, is singled out for a pre-eminent position, second only to that of the Virgin, in the Triptych's decoration. The Constantinopolitan provenance of the icon would have given it the prestige of a true copy of some important icon, either the Hagiosoritissa or the Chymeute, and the fact that it had come as a gift from the Byzantines would give it the seal of authenticity. All these features endowed it with a particular splendour and led to its being transferred to the church built by Davit IV, as well as accounting for the particular significance attached to the decoration of the Triptych into which it was incorporated. The absence of references to the icon in the Georgian sources before its transfer from Khakhuli to Gelati would support such a dating.

The Khakhuli Triptych belongs to that category of precious objects whose value lies not just in the rarity of their materials or the craftsmanship needed to create them. Naturally, the choice of materials and the craftsmanship invested in them do count, but not as much as a system of ideas and symbols which give the object a social power, a power that individuals and groups use to influence one another either to establish new social references or to recreate old ones⁷⁴.

71. D. Mouriki, La présence géorgienne au Sinai d'après le témoignage des icônes du monastère de Sainte-Catherine, *Byzantium and Georgia: Artistic and Cultural Relations*, Athens 1991, p. 39-40. S. Kalopissi, Painters' Portraits in Byzantine Art, *ΔΧΑΕ ΙΖ'* (1993-1994), p. 136. A. Cutler and J.M. Spieser, *Byzance médiévale, 700-1204*, Paris 1996, fig. 310 (colour plate).

72. See *ODB*, III, p. 2171 (N. Ševčenko).

73. *De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae* (ed. J.J. Reiske), I, Bonn 1829, ch. 31, p. 170. P. Hetherington, Enamels in the Byzantine World: Ownership and Distribution, *BZ* 81 (1988), p. 32.

74. M. Godelier, *L'énigme du don*, Paris 1996, p. 93-94.

ΑΝΑΣΥΝΘΕΤΟΝΤΑΣ ΤΑ ΣΜΑΛΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΙΠΤΥΧΟΥ ΚΗΑΚΗΛΙ

Στο Gelati, ο γεωργιανός ηγεμόνας Davit Δ' μετέφερε μια εικόνα από σμάλτο με τη μορφή της Παναγίας, η οποία βρισκόταν έως τότε στη εκκλησία του Khakhuli. Την ενσωμάτωση της εικόνας σε τρίπτυχο μεγάλων διαστάσεων (1,47×2,02 μ.), και τη διακόσμησή του ανέλαβε ο γιος του Demetre Α' στις αρχές της βασιλείας του (1125-1130). Το τρίπτυχο του Khakhuli κοσμεύεται με δεκάδες σμάλτα που φέρουν μορφές ή διακοσμητικά θέματα, σταυρούς και εκατοντάδες πολύτιμους και ημιπολύτιμους λίθους. Με διάφορους τρόπους έχουν προβλεφθεί θέσεις σχεδόν για όλα τα σμάλτα, ώστε να εντάσσονται στον ενιαίο φυτικό διάκοσμο του υποβάθρου χωρίς να τον διασπούν. Αυτό αποδεικνύει ότι ο φυτικός διάκοσμος του υπόβαθρου σχεδιάστηκε για να υποστηρίξει διακοσμητικά όχι μόνον την κεντρική εικόνα της Παναγίας αλλά και τα σπουδαιότερα σμάλτα που είχε στην κατοχή του ο Davit. Τα σμάλτα που καταγράφονται στη μελέτη επιτρέπουν τον προσδιορισμό των αντικειμένων από τα οποία προήλθαν και την αρχική τους θέση σε αυτά, πριν αποσυναρμολογηθούν για να τοποθετηθούν στο τρίπτυχο. Τα πολυτελή αντικείμενα στα οποία ανήκαν ήταν δώρα από το Βυζάντιο στη Γεωργία.

Στην ομάδα I εγγράφονται εννέα ισομεγέθη σμάλτα με τις μορφές δύο αρχαγγέλων, των δώδεκα αποστόλων και της ένθρονης βρεφοκρατούσας Παναγίας (Εικ. 2, 4). Οι διαστάσεις τους, η χρωματική κλίμακα και η τεχνική, η υφολογική τους συγγένεια και η θεματολογία τους κάνουν φανερό ότι είναι έργο ενός καλλιτέχνη και ότι προέρχονται όλα από το ίδιο σύνολο. Η προτεινόμενη διάταξη τους στο αντικείμενο που κοσμούσαν αρχικά φαίνεται στην Εικ. 5. Το λεπτό ορθογώνιο σμάλτο, το κοσμημένο με βαθμιδωτούς σταυρούς, που βρίσκεται επάνω από το σμάλτο με την ένθρονη βρεφοκρατούσα Παναγία, ανήκε κατά τη γνώμη μου στον αρχικό διάκοσμο του έργου. Η σύνθεση που δημιουργείται είναι παρόμοια με την κεντρική σύνθεση του καλύμματος της λειψανοθήκης του Limburg (Εικ. 6),

της οποίας τα ισάριθμα σμάλτα περιβάλλονται από πανομοιότυπο κόσμημα.

Στην ομάδα II εντάσσονται τα δέκα μέταλλα με τις μορφές δύο αρχαγγέλων, τεσσάρων ευαγγελιστών και τεσσάρων στρατιωτικών αγίων, τα οποία βρίσκονται τοποθετημένα συμμετρικά, εκατέρωθεν της κεντρικής εικόνας, μέσα σε δύο ημικυκλικές ζώνες (Εικ. 2). Οι διαστάσεις τους, η στενή υφολογική τους συγγένεια, οι επιγραφές και η χρωματική τους κλίμακα δηλώνουν την προέλευσή τους από το ίδιο σύνολο. Οι εναλλαγές στο χρώμα των φωτοστεφάνων και η ιεραρχία των μορφών με πείθουν ότι το αντικείμενο στο οποίο αρχικά ανήκαν τα σμάλτα ήταν πιθανότατα κάλυμμα λειψανοθήκης και καταλήγω να προτείνω τελικά την διάταξη των σμάλτων της ομάδας II, όπως φαίνεται στην Εικ. 8.

Στις παρυφές των δύο πλαϊνών φύλλων του τριπτύχου είχαν τοποθετηθεί αρχικά είκοσι κυκλικά σμάλτα, ίδιων διαστάσεων. Τα τρία από αυτά έχουν αντικατασταθεί με σύγχρονα σμάλτα στις αρχές του 20ου αιώνα. Οι διαστάσεις, η τεχνική και τα χαρακτηριστικά των μορφών στα παραπάνω σμάλτα οδηγούν στο προφανές συμπέρασμα ότι είναι προϊόντα ίδιου εργαστηρίου και σύγχρονα μεταξύ τους, όμως η θεματογραφία τους δείχνει ότι προέρχονται από δύο διαφορετικά σύνολα (Ομάδες III-IV).

Στην ομάδα III εντάσσονται οι εννέα μορφές των μετωπικών αποστόλων και το μέταλλο του Χριστού, που βρίσκεται στο κέντρο του κάτω μέρους του δεξιού φύλλου του τριπτύχου, όπως μπορεί κανείς να συμπεράνει από τα μορφολογικά τους χαρακτηριστικά. Με βάση την ιεραρχία των μορφών και την εναλλαγή στα χρώματα των φωτοστεφάνων προτείνω τη διάταξη των δέκα αυτών σμάλτων στο πλαίσιο μιας πολυτελούς εικόνας (Εικ. 9).

Στην ομάδα IV εντάσσονται έξι σμάλτα με τις μορφές του Χριστού, της Παναγίας, του Ιωάννη Προδρόμου, του Ματθαίου, του Ιωάννη του Θεολόγου και του

Σίμωνα. Με βάση την εικονογραφία, τη στάση του σώματος των μορφών και την κατεύθυνση του βλέμματός τους, προτείνω τη διάταξή τους στο πλαίσιο μιας άλλης πολυτελούς εικόνας (Εικ. 10).

Την ομάδα V συγκροτούν έξι σφάλτα, τοποθετημένα όλα στο κεντρικό φύλλο: το πλακίδιο όπου ο Χριστός στέφει τον βυζαντινό αυτοκράτορα Μιχαήλ Ζ' Δούκα και τη σύζυγό του Μαρία της Αλανίας, τα δύο πλακίδια με τις μορφές της Παναγίας και του Ιωάννη Προδρόμου, το πλακίδιο με την αψιδωτή απόληξη που φέρει τη μορφή του ένθρονου Χριστού, και τα δύο πλακίδια με τους αρχαγγέλους Μιχαήλ και Γαβριήλ (Εικ. 3-4). Το σφάλτο όπου εικονίζεται η στέψη των αυτοκρατόρων βρίσκεται στην κορυφή του τριπτύχου, καταλαμβάνει την σημαντικότερη θέση σε σχέση με τα υπόλοιπα σφάλτα και, καθώς βρίσκεται στο επάνω μέρος του κεντρικού φύλλου του τριπτύχου, είναι ορατό τόσο όταν το τρίπτυχο είναι κλειστό όσο και όταν είναι ανοικτό. Τα άλλα πέντε σφάλτα έχουν τοποθετηθεί μέσα σε διακριτά πλαίσια, ούτως ώστε να εξαιρείται η σημασία τους και να διαφοροποιούνται από τα υπόλοιπα σφάλτα του τριπτύχου, γεγονός που αποδεικνύει τη σπουδαιότητα του αντικειμένου στο οποίο ανήκαν πριν αποσυναρμολογηθούν. Τα σφάλτα της ομάδας V προέρχονται πιθανότατα από ένα αφιερωτικό στέμμα και η προτεινόμενη διάταξή τους σε αυτό (Εικ. 11) δημιουργεί δύο αυτόνομες και ταυτόχρονα συμπληρωματικές συνθέσεις που έχουν στόχο την προβολή της ιδιαίτερης σχέσης ανάμεσα στα θεία πρόσωπα και τις αυτοκρατορικές μορφές.

Την ομάδα VI συγκροτούν πέντε σφάλτα, που βρίσκονται ακριβώς κάτω από την κεντρική εικόνα: ένα ημικυκλικό πλακίδιο με τη μορφή του ολόσωμου Χριστού Παντοκράτορα και τέσσερα ισομεγέθη πλακίδια με τις προτομές της Παναγίας, του αρχαγγέλου Μιχαήλ και των αγίων Δημητρίου και Γεωργίου. Οι συμμετρικά αντιθετικές χειρονομίες των τεσσάρων μορφών, τα στέμματα που κρατούν ο αρχάγγελος και η Παναγία, η στροφή του σώματός τους και η στροφή του βλέμματος των δύο στρατιωτικών αγίων οδηγούν στην υπόθεση ότι, στο έργο που βρίσκονταν αρχικά, παισιώναν μία ανδρική και μία γυναικεία μορφή σε προτομή: τον αυτοκράτορα Μιχαήλ Ζ' Δούκα και τη σύζυγό του Μαρία της Αλανίας. Τα σφάλτα της ομάδας VI προέρχονται πιθανότατα από ένα διάδημα στο οποίο θα είχαν τη διάταξη που προτείνω στην Εικ. 13. Τα σφάλτα λοιπόν των ομάδων V και VI προέρχονται

από αντικείμενα που εστάλησαν, ως δώρα στη Γεωργία, με αφορμή τη στέψη του βυζαντινού αυτοκράτορα και της γεωργιανής πριγκίπισσας. Όταν αποσυναρμολογήθηκαν για να ενσωματωθούν στη διακόσμηση του τριπτύχου είχαν ήδη ηλικία τουλάχιστον πενήντα ετών.

Την ομάδα VII συνιστούν επτά ορθογώνια σφάλτα (με τις μορφές των ευαγγελιστών και των ιεραρχών Βασιλείου, Γρηγορίου του Θεολόγου και Νικολάου, Εικ. 3-4), που έχουν προστεθεί μετά την αποπεράτωση της διακόσμησης του τριπτύχου. Οι διαστάσεις τους, η υφολογική τους συγγένεια και η τεχνική τους δηλώνουν ότι προέρχονται από το ίδιο σύνολο. Με βάση την εικονογραφία και τις στάσεις των μορφών προτείνω τη διάταξη των σμάτων της ομάδας VII στις εξωτερικές και εσωτερικές όψεις των φύλλων ενός τριπτύχου, όπως φαίνεται στην Εικ. 15. Το αντικείμενο αυτό δεν ήταν στην κατοχή του Demetre, όταν διακοσμήθηκε το τρίπτυχο και η απόφαση να αποσυναρμολογηθεί και να προστεθούν τα σφάλτα του στο διάκοσμο του τριπτύχου οφείλεται στους απογόνους του.

Στο κάτω μέρος των πλαϊνών φύλλων του τριπτύχου έχουν τοποθετηθεί οι δύο όψεις ενός σμαλτωμένου σταυρού που θεωρώ ότι προέρχεται από βυζαντινό εργαστήριο των αρχών του 11ου αι. (Εικ. 16). Ο μάγιστρος Kvirike, που αναφέρει η ελληνική επιγραφή του σταυρού, μπορεί να ταυτιστεί με τον ηγεμόνα της Ιβηρίας Kvirike/Gourgen Α' που πήρε τον τίτλο του μαγίστρου στο διάστημα 1000-1008, ή τον ηγεμόνα της Καχετίας και της Χερετίας Kvirike Γ'. Ο σταυρός πιθανότατα δόθηκε από το βυζαντινό αυτοκράτορα ως δώρο στον Kvirike, μαζί τον τίτλο του μάγιστρου, ο οποίος και πρόσθεσε τη δεύτερη επιγραφή στη γλώσσα του ονομάζοντας τον εαυτό του βασιλιά.

Τα παραπάνω φανερώνουν ότι ο Demetre επέλεξε, για τη διακόσμηση του τριπτύχου, τα σφάλτα των βυζαντινών κειμηλίων που είχε στην κατοχή του. Πέρα από την αισθητική τους ποιότητα, απaráμιλλη σε σύγκριση με τα σφάλτα που κατασκευάζονταν την ίδια εποχή στη Γεωργία, αποδείκνυναν τόσο τον συσσωρευμένο πλούτο της γενιάς των γεωργιανών ηγεμόνων όσο και τις διπλωματικές και συγγενικές τους σχέσεις με τη βυζαντινή αυτοκρατορία. Η επιλογή βυζαντινών σμάτων για τη διακόσμηση του τριπτύχου, σε συνδυασμό με την περίοπτη θέση που καταλαμβάνουν ορισμένα από αυτά στο σύνολο της διακόσμησης, φανερώνουν ότι οι αισθητικές προτιμήσεις του Demetre, στα πρώτα

χρόνια της βασιλείας του, ήταν συνειδητά προσανατολισμένες προς το Βυζάντιο, και αποτελούσαν μέρος της ταυτότητας την οποία ήθελε να κατασκευάσει.

Τέλος, η ποιότητα της κατασκευής και το μέγεθος της Παναγίας του Khakhuli (Εικ. 2, 18), η απόδοση των χαρακτηριστικών του προσώπου της, αλλά κυρίως η φύ-

ση της ως πολυτελούς λατρευτικού αντικειμένου, οδηγούν στην υπόθεση ότι η εικόνα αποτελούσε ένα πολύτιμο δώρο των Βυζαντινών στους Γεωργιανούς. Μια τέτοια δωρεά συνδέεται πιθανότατα με τη Μαρία της Αλανίας, η οποία άλλωστε αναδεικνύεται, από τη διακόσμηση του τριπτύχου, αμέσως μετά την Παναγία.